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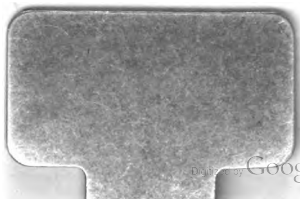
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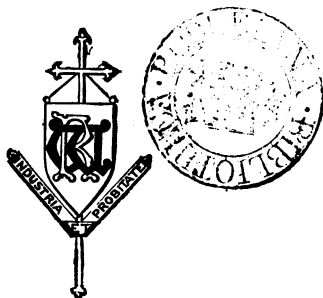
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LENTEN THOUGHTS.

DRAWN FROM THE GOSPEL FOR EACH
DAY OF LENT.

BY THE BISHOP OF NORTHAMPTON.



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INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE often heard a wish expressed that there existed some small book which might supply matter for meditation during Lent, and a further desire that such matter might be drawn from the portions of the Gospels which occur in the Mass during that season. I have endeavoured, however inadequately, to supply the want of such a book. I do not pretend to have written anything new or complete, and my endeavour has simply been to bring together such thoughts as naturally arise from the contemplation of the subjects, and which may be rather suggestive than exhaustive.

The little book has been written chiefly for the use of those who require some aid to meditation, and who find it difficult, without some such help, to concentrate their thoughts upon a spiritual subject. It does not pretend to be a regular course of meditations, but, as will be seen, it is of a desultory nature, containing some repetition, and perhaps even what may appear redundant. Such as it is, and with whatever defects it may have, I give it to the public, with the hope and prayer that it may help some souls to love Jesus Christ more, and for His sake, to endeavour to sanctify themselves.

✠ FRANCIS KERRIL AUCHERST.

? Amherst.

LENTEN THOUGHTS.

MEDITATION

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL FOR ASH-
WEDNESDAY.—*Matt.* vi. 16—21.

PICTURE to yourself our Blessed Lord sitting upon the Mount; His disciples near Him, listening eagerly to Him, and directing the attention of others to Him. See also the multitude of people who had followed Him from various parts, earnestly drinking in His heavenly teaching; and listen to His words in spirit, trying to feel as if you were there. “When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad.”—*Matt.* vi. 16.

I.

How sweet it is to hear our Dear Lord encouraging us to cheerfulness, even in the performance of a penitential act! We

may be quite sure that He does not recommend a worldly gaiety ; for let us look upon His dear face, and there we shall see no signs of it ; but in place of it a sweet heavenly serenity, captivating even to the senses, and how much more so to the pure heart that enters, or tries to enter, into His feelings.

II.

May we never be sad ? We may, but not on account of the performance of any act of Religion. True Christian sadness proceeds only from the contemplation of our sins, and is to be distinguished from that grief which arises from wounded affections, or from sympathy with others. Jesus wept when Lazarus died ; but He was truly sad in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the sins of the whole world came like spectres before His sight, and were heaped upon His sacred and pure soul, and seemed as if they were His own.

III.

Sadness in Religion is opposed to the Spirit of God. "Serve ye the Lord with

joy." "Come in before His presence with exceeding great joy."

It is equally opposed to the spirit of the Catholic Church, and is detestable when united with hypocrisy. The Saints were cheerful and serene.

Do we accept the command to fast without sadness? Do we not grumble and complain of its hardness? Are we truly sad at the sight and thought of our sins? And do we not let all sorts of little miseries make us sad, even so much so as to prevent us from doing our duty properly? If we find any fault in these respects in ourselves, let us now resolve to amend, and to spend this Lent as we would do if we were in the visible company of Our Lord. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

THURSDAY BEFORE FIRST SUNDAY OF
LENT.—*Matt.* viii. 5—13.

Follow in spirit our Blessed Lord in His descent from the Mount, and enter among the crowd that surrounds Him. Keep in His company from place to place. Look

1—2

at Him ; listen to Him ; and see His reception of the centurion who comes to beg for the restoration of his servant to health.

I.

No sooner does the centurion make his petition than Jesus answers, "I will come and heal him," v. 7. How sweet is this readiness of our Dear Lord ! And to show the greatness of His charity, He proposes to do more than is required, namely, to go to the centurion's house, when a word, or mere act of His will might accomplish the cure. In fact, he anticipates the petition, for the centurion had simply stated the grievous affliction which had fallen upon his servant, when Jesus says, "I will go." Oh ! Dear Jesus ! how kind, how loving Thou art !

II.

The Centurion was very *humble*. "Lord," he said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof ; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed," v. 8.. He thought it too great an honour for a sinner that Jesus, so good, so holy, should cross his threshold.

III.

He had great *charity*, as we see by his eagerness to secure a great benefit for his servant ; for we find (Luke vii.) that he had already sent two messages to our Lord, who was approaching his house, before he himself made his request. And he had great *faith* in the power and goodness of Jesus, who said to him, "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee" (Matt. viii. 13); and He had already said that He had "not found so great faith in Israel," v. 10.

Faith ; Charity ; Humility. Have we such faith that we always habitually turn to God in all our distresses ? Do we not rather, as a custom, turn to worldly sources of consolation ? Let us amend this.

Have we great eagerness in our charity to our neighbour ? In the centurion it almost amounted to impatience. When are we impatient ? When our neighbour requires aid, does every lost moment appear to us of immense importance ? Are we not rather impatient that his trials

should trouble us? And how impatient we are under our own trials!

Do we, like Jesus, act at once, when charity calls us? Or again, are we inclined, like Him, to do more than is absolutely asked of us? Dear Jesus, increase our charity.

Do we reflect sufficiently on the immeasurable distance in worthiness that there is between us and God? Or do we not rather accept all His gifts and graces as if they were our due? We have enough to make us humble if we would but think of all our natural and spiritual defects. Let us pray for an increase of Faith, Charity, and Humility. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

FRIDAY BEFORE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

Matt. v. 43—48. ; vi. 1—4.

Our Blessed Lord is preaching on the Mount, as described in the gospel of this day; represent Him then to yourself as preaching to you, and think that you are hearing His voice, while you contemplate His perfections as God and Man, and

while He tells you to be "perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.)

I.

We have been chosen by Almighty God to be members of His church, and therefore to be His faithful followers, His friends, His children, and His heirs. It is His great mercy and love for us that have brought us to this position, the most noble that we can conceive on earth. We therefore ought to endeavour to imitate the holiness and perfection of our heavenly Father. Jesus especially draws our attention to one way in which we ought to strive to attain perfection, namely by loving our enemies, and in this to distinguish ourselves from the heathens. "I say to you, Love your enemies ; do good to them that hate you ; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you," v. 44.

II.

Although He alludes particularly to one way of being perfect, nevertheless His words are of general application, and we

must seek after perfection in all virtues, otherwise we shall not be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Perfection is both of *command* and of *counsel*, that is there is a perfection which we are *obliged* to seek after, and a perfection which we are *advised* to endeavour to attain. We are all *obliged* to seek after perfection in Christianity, and in the state in which we are placed, and to love our enemies, and observe perfectly all the other commands of God. We are *advised* to aim at perfection by the adoption of the evangelical counsels of voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, and religious obedience. Happy those souls which receive a direct call from God to the religious state !

III.

An excellent and most efficacious means of arriving at perfection is to examine carefully and impartially into the state of our soul, and to discover the predominant passion, the principal vice from which our other vices proceed, and to endeavour, with all our power, to root it out. Think what

is your chief vice, what is the one that leads you into so much mischief, and induces you to commit so many sins. Is it pride? Vanity? Laziness? Falsehood? Disobedience? Love of pleasure? Impurity? Neglect of duty? Of the Sacraments? Human respect? Or is it any other vice? Find it out, and resolve to avoid it.

Do I love my enemies for God's sake as I love my friends? Is my love extended to all? or only to those whom my natural inclinations lead me to love, or perhaps from whom I expect something? Do I try to do all my actions, to speak my words, and entertain my thoughts with a view to perfection?

Let me remember in my choice of a state of life that it is my dear Divine Saviour who *advises* me to observe the evangelical counsels. Can I have a better adviser? Will the world advise me so well? Will my own bad inclinations advise so well as He does?

Have I ever properly set to work in real earnest to discover the source of my evil

actions ; and to endeavour, day by day, to weaken my chief vice by falling into the sins to which it leads me, less and less, often ? I will begin now from this moment. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

SATURDAY BEFORE FIRST SUNDAY OF
LENT.—*Mark* vi. 47—56.

Picture to yourself the Apostles rowing in their boat across the Lake of Genesareth. The wind is against them ; the boat labours in the heavy sea, when Jesus walks forth from the shore upon the waters, and seems as if He would pass them by. They think it is a spectre, and cry out with fear, when His voice comes to them over the raging waves, bidding them have courage, for it is He.

I.

The space of our life is like a sea which we must pass over in order to reach the happy shores of Heaven. We have many obstacles to contend against in our voyage, which may be summed up in the words, the World, the Devil, and the Flesh. The

opinions and prejudices of men ; their ridicule, their persecution, their unkindness, their very praises oppose us. Human respect singularly impedes us, we care so much about what men think and say. The Devil raises storms against our salvation by his evil suggestions and temptations, and the Flesh by the rebellion of our corrupt nature. If we truly wish and try to serve God we are sure to meet with these storms, we must expect them, and resolve to overcome them ; if we do not care about His service, all may seem to go on smoothly for a time, but in a moment we shall be lost for ever.

II.

In the storms and trials of life ; that is in our afflictions, in our temptations, in our sins even, Jesus comes towards us to save us, very often in such ways that, like the disciples, we do not recognise Him. Our *hearts* are blinded, and so we do not receive into them the inspirations of His grace. We do not see the use of mortification, of patience under trials, of bearing injuries

and insults calmly, of submitting to all the wise and useful discipline provided for us by the Church. This is our own fault, and we must correct it.

III.

What sweet encouragement is in those words, "It is I, fear ye not." But we must deserve that they should be addressed to us by making use of the means at our disposal for drawing Jesus to our side. Those means are prayer, and the worthy reception of the Sacraments, combined with an exact observance of the commandments, and of the laws of the Church.

Do I ever neglect a duty, or commit a wrong action out of fear of the blame, or ridicule, or impertinent conduct of my fellow-creatures? Am I ever ashamed of my religion, or of any religious practices, because they are contrary to the notions of those that I may meet, or who are about me? Do I ever do good actions in order to acquire praise? Do I, in fact, put the praise or blame of men above the praise or blame of God?

Do I ever mortify myself voluntarily? Do I receive involuntary mortifications in the spirit of penance? And do I comply willingly with all that the Church enjoins for the proper discipline of my soul? Am I fasting and abstaining during this Lent, in a true Catholic spirit? At all events, I will do so now, and I will correct all the faults that have come to my mind during this meditation. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* iv. 1—11.

Our Dear Lord has just come forth from the waters of Jordan, where He had been baptized by S. John the Baptist; the heavens had been opened to Him; He had seen the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and had heard a voice from Heaven saying: This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. *Matt.* iii. 16, 17. And at once He is led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. See Him urged by the Spirit, and hastening to the desert,

and follow Him with your heart in this momentous journey.

I.

It was not the evil spirit, which afterwards tempted Him, that led Jesus into the desert, but the Spirit of God, the Spirit of holiness and truth, with which He was filled. Not a moment was lost after His baptism, but He must begin at once His career as an example to men. He is driven on by the burning ardour which the Holy Ghost enkindled in His heart, and hastens to the awful humiliation of a personal interview with the devil. Consider Him alone upon the side of that distant and barren mountain to which He fled, and in His deep solitariness fasting for forty days and forty nights. See His attitude expressive of sublime resignation to His Father's will. Hear His sighs and prayers for the men whom He had come to save. Try to enter into the unspeakable beauty of the thoughts that fill His Sacred Heart as He contemplates the infinite glory of His Eternal Father. Praying, watching, and fasting, for

forty days and nights, He is alone in sublime solitude.

II.

But, suddenly, He is no more alone. There stands another, in visible presence before Him. All wickedness is confronted with all holiness, all hatred with the ineffable love of God made man, the hideous monstrosity of sin with the calm beauty of the embodiment of heavenly virtue. Oh! daring crime of Satan! Oh! wondrous humiliation of Jesus! He does not fly, and so escape the torture of that odious presence. He stays, and meets the tempter face to face. Contemplate the calm, majestic dignity with which He answers Satan, striking and scathing him with the simple word of God, until the conquered tempter leaves Him.

III.

But He is not now alone. See how from Heaven come streaming down bright lines of angels. See how they cluster about Him; how in attitudes of adoration they minister to Him as their Creator and their

Lord. Join with those angelic bands in sentiments of congratulation, love, and adoration.

Oh! How I love Thee, my Jesus, for the humiliation of this temptation undergone for my sake! How I admire Thee! Yet how often do I not forget the example Thou hast shown me! Do I never listen, with only a half-will of resisting, to the tempter? Let me think only of yesterday. Had I any temptations? What did I do when they came to me? I am ashamed when I think of my conduct, and contrast it with Thine.

Again, so far from imitating my Lord, have I never rather followed the example of the devil, and dared to remain in the presence of God when my soul has been hideous to Him through mortal sin? I cannot fly from His presence, but I can cleanse my soul if I will, and make it pleasing in His sight, by a good confession. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xxv. 31—46.

Let us represent to ourselves the Son of Man as our Dear Lord loves to call Himself, coming in His Majesty, and all the angels with Him, and seating Himself upon His throne of judgment. Then let us see all the nations of the earth: men who have been dead for thousands of years, and those who have only just been consigned to the tomb, trooping in countless multitudes towards the judgment seat.

I.

We must not look upon this scene as if we were mere spectators at a distance. We shall most certainly be among those who shall awaken at the sound of the trumpet of the Archangel. Our bodies will once more be united to our souls; those very bodies and souls which we now possess; and we shall arise from our graves, from the sea, from places where our bones may have been scattered, and shall be urged by an irresistible force to go before the face of the Judge. It will be in vain to try to hide ourselves,

and so escape the terrible scrutiny and exposure of that day. We shall be no longer our own masters. The exercise of free-will will be at an end ; and whether we will or not, we must be judged.

II.

See how our Lord divides the good from the bad, even as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats on the hill-side. On which side am I ? On which side do I now deserve to be ? On the right with the good, or on the left with those who are hurled to everlasting torments, and the loss of God and all good ? Let me think seriously on the state of my soul as it is now, and consider with what face I could appear before the all-seeing scrutiny of the eyes of Jesus. I may die in a moment, as so many thousands have done who thought their chances of life as good as I now think mine. And if I die in mortal sin, I must be judged in mortal sin.

III.

Consider the law of love as the foundation of the judgment. How wondrous it

is to see God's judgment and His love brought into such close contact, and seem to have been made one ! And love for the least of human kind ! "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren you did it to Me." How sweetly He identifies himself with His creatures ! And in what alluring colours is not the judgment depicted to us, when, without this, its terrors would have been increased in an almost infinite degree. It is Love that judges upon that throne of majesty.

I am confounded when I look into the state of my soul, and see how unfit I 'am to pass this great judgment of love. As I am, I dare not brave "the wrath of the Lamb." O Jesus ! I will "sweep my soul" as holy David says ; I will be charitable ; I will let Thy love be supreme in my heart ; and, for Thy sake, I will love my neighbour as myself. In all my transactions with men, I will consider that I am dealing with Thee. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria,

TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xxi. 10—17.

See our Dear Lord passing through the inquiring crowds who hastened about Him in the streets of Jerusalem, all in commotion asking one another, "Who is this?" Regardless of their clamour, and of their questions and answers concerning Him, He goes straight on to the Temple, and entering it, finds men there who bought and sold, and thus desecrated the holy precincts. In His zeal for His Father's glory, He cast them out, overturning their tables and benches, and bitterly reproaching them.

I.

The zeal which Jesus had for His Father's honour and glory, was proportioned to the intimate knowledge which He had of what that honour demanded, and of how it was assailed by the unworthy conduct of these men. Since that knowledge was perfect and most exact, we can form some distant idea of how great His indignation was, and how His Sacred Heart was

pained when He saw that men forgot the holiness of His Father's house, and turned that sacred temple into a common market-place. His indignation is a holy indignation, without one particle of fault in it. Contemplate it, and consider how detestable to Him is any profanation of holy things.

II.

The Temple of Jerusalem was the type of the Christian soul, which by Baptism is made the temple of the Holy Ghost, and by the Holy Communion becomes the dwelling place of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. If the anger of Jesus was so great when He saw the material Temple profaned, what must be the pain of His Sacred Heart when He beholds an immortal soul in mortal sin?—when He is forced, as it were, to enter into such a soul, a defiled temple, when he is unworthily received in the Communion? Such a soul is to Him a den of thieves; nay worse, a den of devils. Into what fearful company the unworthy receiver forces the pure Lamb of God! How terrible is the wrath of that Lamb,

and the punishment which awaits such a soul!

III.

The anger of Jesus did not take possession of Him so far as to make him forget His mission of love and mercy, for we find that, while still in the Temple, the blind and the lame came clustering about Him, and He cured them. Contemplate our Lord in these acts of goodness, and imagine you hear Him speaking kind and encouraging words to these poor people, and see Him restoring to them their lost faculties. The hard-hearted and profane He casts away; but the poor, the helpless, and afflicted, He gathers to His Sacred Heart.

Am I ever indignant? Yes, truly, very frequently. Is it because God is offended, and out of a pure zeal for His honour? No; it is because *I* am offended. It is when I am insulted; when men undervalue me, when they prefer others to me; when they question or deny my claims to their consideration. Let me amend this.

Have I such great claims to the esteem

of men when I have so often forfeited that of God by my sins? Perhaps even I have gone the length of profaning the Sacraments, of making a bad confession and Communion. I will examine my conscience upon these points, and I will apply a remedy if I find anything wrong.

Again; I know that, as a Catholic, I have sometimes been indignant at words and acts which insulted the religion I profess. Has it been simply an indignation on account of God? And has it ever made me forget the duty of charity? Has it ever so far upset my mind that I have been distracted through it, and allowed myself to be led by it into any fault? I will search into this, and correct myself. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

EMBER WEDNESDAY.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xii. 38—50.

Imagine our Blessed Lord surrounded by Scribes and Pharisees who try to tease and annoy Him by asking Him to perform a miracle for them. Admire His patience; and at the same time the outspoken and

unflinching way in which He tells them that their generation is an evil one, and in which He proclaims His superiority to Jonas and to Solomon.

I.

Patience and truth were most conspicuous in the conduct of Jesus. And, after His example, they have been very observable in the lives of His Saints.

Patience means suffering, or waiting with calmness and resignation; and what Jesus had to suffer in the scene here recorded, was the importunate impertinence of malicious and hypocritical men. How trying this must have been to one who saw into the depths of their hearts, and who knew the motives which urged them to make their request!

II.

Notwithstanding that He knew and measured their malice and hypocrisy, He does not disdain to give them instruction, but speaks out the truth plainly to them, telling them that the men of Ninive and the

Queen of the South should rise up in judgment against them.

III.

The men of Ninive did penance on the preaching of Jonas, and the Queen of the South came from very distant lands to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, although they were Pagans, our Dear Lord speaks in praise of them for what they had done well. It was their correspondence with a supernatural inspiration that called forth His praises. He is continually calling us to penance by the voice of His Church, and especially at this time of Lent ; and He would ever have us seek after the wisdom of Himself, who is greater than Solomon, the wisdom of seeking after His love and His law before all things on earth, and our eternal salvation in the next life. What is all worldly wisdom when compared with that which the Saints sought and found in the study of His Sacred Heart ?

Am I patient habitually in all my dealings with God, and with my fellow men ?
If I desire to love God above all things,

am I not impatient when I find that I do not succeed at once? And does not this impatience show itself by a sort of petulant despair, so that I am tempted to give up trying to be virtuous or perfect? Have I ever yielded to this?

But if I am so imperfect as not even to have arrived at the sincere wish to serve God perfectly, how many things excite my impatience! I cannot stand the slightest impertinence. I cannot bear that men should expect me to give any proofs of my truth, &c., &c. And the insolence of men, very often perhaps, even deters me from announcing to them the truth, and makes me silent when in duty I ought to speak.

Let me take heed lest the very Pagans, and those who are not Catholics, who have done their duty as far as they know how, rise up in judgment against me who have had so many graces, so many opportunities and chances of doing good. O Jesus! I will do penance in time, and I will accept this Lent as coming from Thee, through Thy Church, for the due correction of my

soul. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xv. 21—28.

Imagine in your mind Jesus walking with His disciples along the sea-coast of Phœnicia, near those ancient towns of Tyre and Sidon, and see the Cananean woman who comes full of faith in His miraculous powers, to invoke His aid for the cure of her daughter.

I.

Jesus did not answer a word to her first supplication; He seemed to turn a deaf ear to her entreaty. In my case, would not this be enough to repel me altogether? Should I not feel that my pride was wounded, and that I was made of no consideration? How often has it not happened to me that I have prayed for favours, and have been discouraged, or even disgusted at their not being granted at once? I will look upon the dear face of Jesus, and study His Sacred Heart, and I shall find that, all

the while, He is full of sweetness and mercy, that His heart is yearning for me, that if there be any fault, it is all my own, and that the only thing to disgust me should be my own pride and impatience.

II.

When the disciples asked Jesus to send her away because she was crying after them, His reply was that He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This answer, as excluding the Cananean from His mission, would seem to be a terrible rebuff, but it appears only to have induced her to approach nearer, to adore Him, and to beseech Him piteously, "O Lord, help me." Admire the strength of Her desire that her petition should be complied with; and also the hidden motive of our Dear Lord, who wished to make a trial of, and to manifest publicly, her perseverance and her faith.

III.

The second answer of Jesus would be still more repelling to a soul of less hu-

mility, for He said to her : “ It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to dogs.” How would it be with me in such a case ? But with her, humility and earnestness gained the day. She said, “ Yea, Lord ; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.” And she deserved to hear that other answer, which crowned her happiness, and sent her away rejoicing : “ O woman, great is thy faith ; be it done unto thee as thou wishest.”

The petition of this woman had all the conditions of supplicatory prayer. It was earnest ; for her whole conduct shows how her heart was absorbed in the wish for its accomplishment. It was devout ; for she adored Jesus. It was humble ; for she did not hesitate under what we might consider to be rude repulses ; nor did she shrink from likening herself to the dumb creatures which are content to pick up the crumbs beneath the table. It was persevering ; for she would not desist in spite of all. It was full of faith ; for she must have firmly believed in His power, not only to have per-

severed, but to deserve from Him those words, "great is thy faith."

I will imitate this woman in my prayer. I will endeavour to give my prayers all the conditions which can make them good. Many times I have been tempted to think that God forgot me, that He would take no heed of me, because all did not turn out at once as I wished and prayed. But now I know that all His conduct to me has been for my greater and more lasting good. I will never doubt Thee, O my Jesus! My heart shall rest in Thee; and I will always be sure that whatever Thou dost to me, or for me, is the best that could befall me. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

EMBER FRIDAY.

GOSPEL.—*John* v. 1—15.

Picture to your mind the pool of Bethesda, a small pond just within one of the gates of Jerusalem, and see the multitude of sick persons lying in the porches which gave entrance to it. See our Blessed Lord passing by, and attracted by the sight of

one severely afflicted, and make vivid to yourself the whole scene related in the gospel.

I.

The Venerable Bede says, that the blind represent those who have not the light of sacred knowledge; the lame, those who have not moral strength to carry out what they see and know to be right; the withered, those who have not the unction of divine love.

Now let me consider if I have taken pains to acquire the knowledge of sacred things, of my religion, of its doctrines and practices. I certainly have had opportunities enough; have I taken advantage of those opportunities? Or have I not rather felt weariness and disgust when I have heard the word of God preached; and have I not preferred any light and amusing reading to giving up even a small portion of my time each day to studying the science of the saints, and how to be perfect?

II.

Supposing that I have tried to illuminate

my mind with sacred knowledge, and particularly with the knowledge of what God requires of me especially and individually, what use have I made of that knowledge when it has been made manifest to me, either by the inspirations of divine grace, or by the ordinary, practical way of gaining it, namely, by the advice and direction of my confessor? Have I consulted my director when I have been in uncertainty about God's will in my regard? And if he has told me what I ought to do, and so given me knowledge on the point, have I complied with his directions? This consideration is of the highest importance in the choice of a state of life, which does not mean what profession or mode of living in the world we shall pursue, but what is our *vocation*. Does God call us to serve Him in the priesthood, or in religion; or does He will that we should save our souls by marrying and settling in the world? Have I ever allowed any earthly consideration to interfere with what I have learnt to be, or what I have solid grounds to believe to be my vocation? If I have, I have taken an

awful responsibility on myself ; namely, that of choosing for myself in opposition to God's will.

III.

My whole soul, and all that I do, will be withered and dry if I have not the unction of divine love. I must endeavour to obtain it, then, by observing the commandments in every particular ; by prayer, and a frequent approach to the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. Particular devotions also will help me to progress in divine love ; not only such as are expressive of love to God and His Saints, and which give us a sensible satisfaction, but also those which cost us a greater exercise of charity, such as praying for the dead, and devoutly performing spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Let me examine myself on these points, and see if I have made the acquisition of divine love the great object of my life.

O my dear Lord Jesus, how often hast Thou said to me interiorly, " Wilt thou be made whole ?" And have I not neglected

Thy most gracious mercy? Have I not preferred to remain spiritually blind, and lame, and withered? I see my misery, and I will no longer refuse Thy aid. Help me, dear Jesus; help me, that I may know Thy will in my regard, that I may accomplish it perfectly, and that I may acquire the perfection of Divine Love. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

EMBER SATURDAY.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xvii. 1—9.

Imagine, as far as you are able, the glorious vision which was shown to the eyes of the disciples Peter, James, and John. See our Dear Lord on the summit of Mount Thabor suddenly transfigured; His face shining as the sun, and His garments becoming white as snow. Look upon the beautiful face of Jesus all lighted up by the brightness of His Divinity which glowed through the veil of His Humanity, and be content, with Peter, to remain there gazing upon His beauty.

I.

"It is good for us to be here." These are the words of St. Peter, who would have remained for ever in the presence of Jesus, contemplating His beauty in silent adoration. It is always good to be with Jesus. Others talk of being with Him, and of going to Him, but none can point out the way to Him, nor tell us how to remain with Him, but the Catholic Church. How can I ever love my Church too much which teaches me so much? I know what she teaches me in order that I may be with Him. Do I always make use of the means which she places within my reach? Am I as fond as I ought to be of being with Him in the most Blessed Sacrament, by receiving Him into my heart, or by visiting Him in the tabernacle?

II.

In the Blessed Sacrament, when I visit it, I can contemplate Jesus in whatever aspect I may choose. I can look upon Him as the little child of Bethlehem, weeping and wailing, and speaking to His Blessed

and Immaculate Mother that language of babes which has no words, but which mothers can so well understand. I can look upon Him as transfigured with all the wondrous beauty of Thabor ; or as the outcast in the garden of Gethsemane, and in all the unspeakable woe of His most bitter dying. It is good for me thus to visit and contemplate Him, for I cannot do so without feeling my heart warm to Him more and more, and without increasing my love for Him. And this, after all, is what I most wish for on earth. Why am I then so cold and so negligent with respect to the Blessed Sacrament ?

III.

St. Peter was content to remain there, and was perfectly unselfish in his satisfaction. He said : " Let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He did not think of himself further than that he wished for the continuous sight of the bright vision then before him. He would have remained there, far from his home and his friends ; without care for his food or his raiment ;

without shelter from the cold dews of that mountain top by night, and the terrible heat of the Syrian sun by day. He only thought of his Lord, and after Him, of those friends of His who accompanied Him during the transfiguration. What a contrast my conduct presents to that of St. Peter! How many trifling causes prevent me from going to Jesus, and being with Him in the Blessed Sacrament! How many distractions I have when there! Worldly cares, and all sorts of little inconveniences come to disturb my thoughts, and to take them away from the contemplation of my Lord.

My Jesus, it shall no longer be so. I will look upon the possession of Thee and Thy grace as my greatest treasure, to which no earthly treasure can be for one moment compared. I will seek Thee in all things; and especially will I seek Thee by a worthy and devout reception of Thee in the Blessed Eucharist, and by cultivating in my soul a more intense love of Thee in that Holy Sacrament. Jesus aid me by thy grace, Pater, Ave, Gloria.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—Same as Yesterday.

Imagine yourself on Thabor, and gazing with the Apostles on the glorious vision of Christ transfigured. What thoughts would fill your mind if you were there, and beheld Jesus in His Sacred Humanity before you?

I.

The sight of Jesus in such glory would raise in your soul thoughts of profound adoration. You would fall down before Him, overcome with the splendour of eternal light which shone around Him for the time. He is still, and for ever, the same Jesus; and He beholds you, although you do not see Him. His Sacred Humanity in Heaven is resplendent with an infinitely more glorious light than that which shone on Thabor. You know this by faith. Behold Him then with the eyes of faith, and let all the powers of your soul bow before Him in supreme adoration. Offer to Him the homage of your whole

being, and promise Him that you will never, with the help of His grace, do anything unworthy of His Divine Presence.

II.

During the Transfiguration a bright cloud overshadowed Him and the Apostles, and a voice was heard from the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." And the Apostles were afraid. You would have been afraid also at this manifestation of God. And now that your mind is absorbed in the contemplation of Him, are you not afraid when you think of your unworthiness? When you reflect that if it were not for His mercy, you would have died when you were in your first mortal sin; in your second; your third; your hundredth? Are you in mortal sin at this moment? Promise Him that you will make yourself fit for His presence by a good confession, and that you will do so at the first opportunity, without any putting off. Make an act of contrition now. You would do so if suddenly you were to see

Him before you, or if you were to hear, with your mortal ears, the awful voice of God. You know that God is present here and now as much as if you saw Him.

III.

Again; were you on Thabor and beheld the face of Jesus; how your heart would be inflamed with love of Him! with the desire of being with Him, and never being separated from Him for all eternity! You would tell Him how much you loved Him, or at least how truly you desired and longed to love Him, that you might gain His love. Do so now; and excite your heart to a great, burning desire of the love of God. Think how little anything but what is God, or in God, and for God, is worthy of the love of an immortal soul.

Do I give Thee, O Jesus! all the adoration and love of which I am capable? I know the answer which Thou must give me. I can adore Thee and love Thee more than I do now. I can reflect more upon Thy Divinity and Thy Humanity than I do. Oh! help me with Thy grace.

Increase my faith in Thy adorable presence, and let me never forget it. Prostrate in adoration and love at Thy dear feet, I hide my face and grieve from my heart that I have ever offended Thy awful but loving Majesty. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* viii. 21—29.

Jesus was probably in the Temple when He delivered the sermon contained in the words of this day's gospel; imagine Him then there surrounded by Scribes, Pharisees, and a number of other Jews. See with what calm dignity Jesus bears Himself in the midst of His captious and cunning enemies, and how, in spite of their hostility, He proclaims the Truth.

I.

Jesus does not fear opposition, nor even malice. He knows that what He has to say is true, and though the whole world were ranged against Him in enmity or ridicule, He would still proclaim the Truth.

Has a false fear of the world any influence over me? Do I fear, or care for what men may say of me on account of my maintaining Catholic truth? Have I ever shrunk from an open profession of my faith, when God's honour, and my neighbour's good may have required it, on account of any fear of the world? Have I ever felt ashamed of any Catholic doctrine or practice; or of taking decidedly the side of truth and of virtue in the face of the injuries or sneers of others? What a noble figure Jesus makes when He encounters hostility, compromising nothing, yielding in nothing, but keeping the straightforward line of duty in spite of all.

II.

Jesus not merely announced to the Jews the eternal truths, but He said many hard things of them when occasion required. He did not conceal, nor attempt to conceal their faults from them, but told them of their obstinate resistance to God's grace, and to what this would lead them, viz., that they should die in their sins. It is the part

of a true friend to tell another, in all charity, of his faults and errors, and to what they will lead if they are not corrected. Jesus is our true friend, and by His word, by His Church, and by the voice of our own consciences, He is always telling us of our transgressions. And if the Church sometimes tells us hard truths about ourselves, or demands from us some slight denial to our natural inclinations, shall we refuse to acknowledge the friendly character of all this? When the Church speaks, let us hear Jesus speaking by her mouth, and let us listen to Him with all meekness and docility, so that we may not incur the punishment of the Jews.

III.

Let us reflect, that Jesus knew, all the while, that the men to whom He was speaking would seek His life for His plain, outspoken condemnation of their conduct. By His Divine knowledge, He knew not only every thought that was there and then passing through their minds, but He also foresaw all that would come of it; how

they would hate Him, thirst for His blood, and hunt Him to death. Let us adore the patience and the inflexible holiness of our Lord, and let us try to warm up our hearts to a true and most sincere sympathy with Him.

When I examine myself, have I not reason to be ashamed that my conduct so little resembles that of Jesus? If there are any whom I love with a worldly love, am I not too ready to cover up their faults even from their own eyes? And if, on the other hand, I have an ill-feeling towards any one, I am too apt to exaggerate their failings. Truth, without diminution or exaggeration, is what I ought to learn from Jesus. O my Dear Lord! let me never shrink from the truth, however disagreeable it may be to me, or to those to whom I speak. With Thy grace, I resolve that I never will. Hear my resolution, and bless it. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xxiii. 1—12.

See our Dear Lord still surrounded by Scribes, Pharisees, and multitudes of persons besides His disciples ; look upon His face ; and hear His words as if they were addressed to you.

I.

How wonderfully painful and repulsive it must have been to Jesus to see the malice and hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, to know it all most perfectly, and to appreciate with a most full understanding all the wickedness which reigned in their hearts. He could not bear the presence of sin in any way, or in any shape, and yet out of His love for man, and a desire to spread His Father's truth, He submitted to be constantly in the midst of sin and of sinners. Learn to love Jesus for this sign of His love for you individually ; and consider your own conduct with regard to Him. Have you, like Him, an intense hatred of sin ? And yet a great patience with sinners ? Do you willingly submit to be

placed in awkward or unpleasant situations for His sake? Nothing can, by any possibility, be so repulsive to us as sin was to Him, who was all purity and holiness, and yet we are very fastidious about any circumstances that are not quite agreeable to us, particularly when the performance of our duty brings us into contact with them. Is it generally sin that excites our disgust? Let us amend our conduct.

II.

The disgust which filled the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the sight of the wickedness of the Pharisees, was very much heightened by their hypocrisy. He knew the utter hollowness of their pretensions to virtue, while He, in common with others, saw their sanctimonious ostentation of good works, and the arrogance with which they asserted their spiritual superiority. How infinitely repulsive this must have been to Him whose whole conduct was so noble and upright, and in whom there could be nothing mean or pretentious! What dost Thou see in me, my Jesus? Are my out-

ward acts always indications of what really exists in my heart? Do I always speak simply that which I feel? Art Thou never shocked by observing in me talk and show of great, noble, and virtuous feelings which really have no root in my soul? Do I never try to appear to men to be better than what I know I must be to Thy all-seeing eye?

III.

The horror of Jesus was heightened not alone by the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but also by their want of charity and consideration for others. They bound, as He said, "heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them." Pretension with regard to virtue is sure to be accompanied by uncharitableness. If we make great outward professions of virtue, we are certain to look down upon our neighbours, and to demand more from them than we are willing to do ourselves. Let us examine ourselves upon this head, and see if we are not often cen-

sorious about our neighbour's conduct with regard to the very things in which we are signally deficient. We think our neighbour vain, conceited, haughty, negligent, given to unkind conversation, or what not; or perhaps accuse him in our own minds of greater crimes, while, if we looked at ourselves, what should we find? Is there anything in us to warrant our being so exacting with respect to our neighbour?

Dear Lord Jesus, I will, with Thy grace, be patient with others; I will try to know myself thoroughly. How many graces Thou hast given me! How long Thou hast borne with me! And shall I, sinner as I am, be supercilious to my neighbour, or think myself in any way better than he is? I will hate hypocrisy in my own conduct, because it is most detestable in itself, and most offensive to Thee. I will examine as to my past, and do all in my power to amend. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF
LENT. GOSPEL.—*Matt. xx. 17—28.*

Picture to yourself Jesus on His way to Jerusalem, surrounded by a number of disciples, and other persons attracted towards Him by various motives. See Him take his twelve chosen Apostles aside, and hear Him communicate to them the solemn history of what was to befall Him. Listen to His words; take them into your heart, and ponder on them.

I.

Consider how Jesus delights to call Himself The Son of Man in His humility. There was a singular appropriateness in His doing so on this occasion, because as simply the Son of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, He was incapable of suffering. But to redeem us, and out of pure love to us, He chose to become man, and to be born of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, that so He might be able to suffer for us. No man, nay, not all the pure angels who ever adore before the throne

of God, could have thought of such a means for man's redemption. It was only the eternal and infinite love of God that could have conceived the thought, that God should become man, for this very purpose, that He might be able to suffer. Oh! what love God has had for us from the very beginning! What love for us burned in the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

II.

He goes on to tell those wonder-stricken Apostles that He shall be *betrayed*. It was not enough for the love of Jesus towards us that His enemies should obtain possession of Him by any means. *Treachery* was to do the work. We have heard of princes being betrayed by those whom they had loaded with favours, of friends being betrayed by those whom they had trusted with entire confidence, and our hearts have burned with a most natural and honest indignation. We hate the name of traitor or betrayer. We would rather be called almost anything than *traitor*. There is such an instinctive horror of treachery im-

planted in the human breast. What then must have been the sense of horror which Jesus, the Son of God, and the Son of man, had in His Sacred Heart of the dastardly crime by which He was to be betrayed? He had all the hatred of God for sin, and all the detestation of man for this peculiar one of betrayal. And He knew and felt that treachery was hanging over Him like a dark cloud; and, worst of all! that this treachery was to come from a friend, from one of His chosen Apostles, from one whom He had loaded with favours, and taken into His most intimate confidence. Oh! fearful weight of woe and sadness that oppressed His dear Sacred Heart!

III.

Consider how Jesus calmly narrated to His Apostles the details of His coming sufferings; that He should be betrayed to the priests and the scribes, men whose very position should have ranged them on His side; that they should condemn Him, the Lord of life, to death; that they should

deliver Him to pagans to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified. Look upon His face, while He tells these things, and try to enter into the feelings of His Sacred Heart at the prospect of all that is to come upon Him. The fact of His being God intensifies it all to Him! for He sees it all most exactly and most perfectly. Moreover, His Divine will chose that He should suffer. He therefore chose suffering with an intensity of which we can form no conception, and the prospect of His agony was in proportion to the actual severity of it when it really came upon Him. And yet He speaks of it all so calmly that when the mother of the sons of Zebedee comes to Him, He is ready to listen to her, and to enter into conversation with her. Admire the quiet dignity of Jesus, and urge your heart to love Him more and more.

O Jesus! I resolve to love Thee more and more, and to make Thee a suitable return by never doing anything to offend Thee, and by doing all that I know Thou wouldst wish me to do. Do Thou aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke* xvi. 19—31.

Sit at the feet of our Dear Lord, and drink in His words as a draught of heavenly wisdom. Do not think of the Pharisees, nor of any one but of Jesus and thyself.

I.

Jesus, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, wishes to impress upon us the vanity of all earthly good things; that is, their emptiness, and uselessness for the acquirement of eternal happiness, unless they be employed as God wishes us to employ them. All the temporal goods which we possess are given to us by Almighty God in trust. We are the trustees and dispensers of them, and shall have to give an account to Him of the use we have made of them. The use to which He wills that we should put them, is to make them conduce to the everlasting salvation of our souls. This is the case with everything that we have. All that God gives us is good in itself; and if we come to harm

through it, it is all our own doing. Lawfully acquired riches are good in themselves, but they become mere vanities if we simply use them for our own gratification; things that will pass away when the breath leaves our bodies, and leave behind only remorse and suffering.

II.

We may make a good use of riches and other temporal things, and thus lay up treasures in Heaven, where no rust will consume them, and no thieves will break in and steal. The use which Jesus inculcates in the Gospel of to-day is that by which we alleviate the sufferings and poverty of our needy brethren. Do we reflect sufficiently upon this duty of Christian charity? We may say that we have very little for ourselves, and, consequently, cannot spare anything for others; but would it not be better for us to deprive ourselves sometimes of some little extra pleasure, some little delicacy, some trifling piece of finery, in order that we may have something to bestow in alms? The alms of the poor, which

involve a real sacrifice, are very pleasing to God, and very dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It will be a good exercise during Lent, to see what we can lay by for the poor, and to bestow it for the love of Him who so greatly loves the poor.

III.

Jesus Christ chose for Himself a life of poverty. He more nearly resembled Lazarus than the rich man. Yet He could, as the Lord and Master of all things, to whom belonged the earth and the fulness thereof, have surrounded Himself with prosperity, affluence, and every luxury, if He had so willed. He who could command legions of angels, could have summoned all the riches of the world to His feet; yet He chose poverty, to teach us how we should be detached from the things of the world; and to manifest His love for the poor, who are emphatically called by the Church, the poor of Christ. Poverty is no disgrace under the Christian dispensation. It has been dignified by the life and the practice

of Jesus ; and, in imitation of Him, by the practice of His saints.

Let me consider what I have done with what God has given me. Supposing me to be rich ; have I remembered that my riches were only given to me in trust ? And have I, out of my abundance, been ready to assist those who need my aid, to the utmost of my ability ? Supposing that I have but moderate means, or that I am in actual poverty ; have I still had no way in which I could show that I am a true Catholic, by making some little sacrifice for the benefit, however apparently slight, of those still poorer than myself ? I will seriously think of these things, and for Thy sake, O loving Jesus, I will amend my conduct, lest I share in the condemnation of the rich man. Rather let me be poor as Lazarus and enjoy Heaven, than be abounding in worldly affluence and lost for ever. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xxi. 33—46.

Imagine yourself standing with the crowd

around Jesus; look upon Him, and hear His words.

I.

The vineyard spoken of by Jesus to the Jews, signifies the Synagogue; and Jesus tells them how the vineyard shall be taken from them, that is, how the Gentiles shall be brought together to be the possessors of the covenant, the Church, and how they shall be deprived of their inheritance on account of their ill-treatment of the prophets, and of their awful crime in putting to death the only Son of God, the master of the vineyard. In a spiritual sense, the words of Jesus may apply to the grace which God gives to each Christian soul, which is the vineyard intrusted to each one's care. This grace has to be cultivated with extreme assiduity and watchfulness, and the Master of the vineyard will expect a return in proportion to the amount of grace given. How many graces have I not received from God! I cannot count them. Have I put them to the best advantage, and cultivated them so as to make a suitable and proportionate return to my Master?

II.

On the contrary; have I not terribly neglected the grace which He has given me? Have I not, by my sins and my spiritual sloth, turned His gifts to nought, nay, even against the very giver of them, so as, if it were possible, to make Him a loser by His generosity? Again; I feel that I have shut the ears of my heart to the admonitions of my conscience, to the teaching of the Church by her pastors, to the counsels of my director, to the advice or commands of my parents or other superiors, and to the warnings of my truest friends. And thus I have ill-treated and driven away the messengers sent to me by my Master. Nay, I have spurned His only Son, and as far as lay in my power, I have put Him to death again, by making His death and His merits of no use to me. I have despised Him, and have preferred to take my own way to following Him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." The vineyard of my soul has thus, by my fault, been laid desolate, the wild beast of sin has devoured it, and in place of the fruits of

virtue, I have nothing to show but the briars and thorns of vice. Is this really my case; or can I conscientiously say that it is not?

III.

If it be my case, what am I to expect if I do not instantly set to work in earnest to repair the past, and to make good the future? I can only look for the judgment pronounced against those wicked husbandmen in the Gospel. God's grace will be withdrawn from me altogether, and given to others who will cultivate it well. Perhaps I feel that I am not so fervent as I once was; that I do not relish spiritual things as I once did; that my soul is becoming lukewarm and negligent, and is not all this a sign of the withdrawal of God's grace? It is a terrible thing to find, as we are advancing in age, that we are not so good as we used to be. God grant that this may not be my case. Let me carefully examine whether it be so or not, and if I find that it is, I will seek for the cause, and root it out as a noxious weed

that impedes the growth of God's grace in my soul, and will bring me to destruction.

O Jesus ! Thou knowest what I am, and what I am worth in Thy sight. I cannot conceal my real state from Thee, however much I may veil my baseness from others by hypocrisy, and from myself by a wilful blindness. I will really examine my conscience ; I will make a good confession, and with Thy helping grace, try to make my soul worthy of a visit from Thee. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke* xv. 11—32.

Imagine Jesus Christ as a father whom you have offended, and whose home you have left ; and then think of yourself as an outcast, miserable, poor, and forlorn, with the thoughts of the old home just rising in your heart.

I.

Consider the miserable state of the prodigal son ; far away from his own home, and that by his own fault. All his means

are squandered in debauchery and excess ; he has not a friend now that he is no longer rich ; he is very hungry, and is sent to feed swine, and would fain satisfy himself with husks, but there is no one who will give him any. What a picture of desolation this presents to us ! He who had been so delicately nurtured has fallen into such utter woe ! See him starving, with death staring from his hollow eyes, and envying the very hogs. Sad as this picture is, it is but a most faint likeness of a soul that has quitted its Father's house through sin. It has wandered away from God, and has sought to satisfy itself with forbidden delights, but has found them empty and hollow. Nothing can make up for the loss of the quiet and holy joys of its Father's house. All that was worth having is gone. It is weary, desolate, hungry, almost despairing. O my soul ! art thou in this state ? If thou art not, it is only by the mercy of God ; and let the thought of such desolation keep thee ever in thy Father's home, that is, in God's grace.

II.

At last the thought of home came to the poor prodigal's heart. He thought of the old days of innocence and peace. Thought how, even now, the hired servants at home were abounding in bread, while he was starving. He makes no delay, but says at once that he will go home to his father and confess his fault. Far from urging any claim, he will tell his father that he is not worthy to be called his son. What a beautiful picture of a repenting soul! First there is regret for the good that is lost, and a sense of the present actual misery of sin; then the determination to return to God with love for Him, and confidence in Him; a deep sense of unworthiness, and a sincere sorrow for the past, combined with a resolution, such as we may be sure existed in the prodigal's heart, of never again offending.

III.

How ready the father was to forgive and receive his penitent child! Doubtless, he

was watching eagerly for his return, for he sees him from afar, "a long way off," and running to him falls upon his neck, and kisses him. Not content with this, he clothes him with the best robe, puts a ring on his finger, and shoes upon his feet, and makes a great banquet to celebrate his return. If such be the love and goodness of an earthly parent, what is the love of the great loving heart of Jesus to a repentant soul! We cannot fathom or measure it, it is so immense and so intense. What an encouragement this ought to be to us to arise at once from our misery, and to return to Him! He is watching for us, and will come to meet us. What does this mean? It means that He has established a holy Sacrament to which His Church is ever calling us, the Sacrament of Penance, where He sits looking for us and expecting us. The wish and intention of reconciling ourselves with Him by its means will draw Him towards us by His grace, and will bring grace to us. Then with contrition, confession, and satisfaction joined with the holy absolution, we shall be embraced to

His heart, clothed with grace, and loaded with divine favours.

Oh! how can I ever deliberately and intentionally neglect to reconcile myself with God? The state of my soul in sin is a condition of utter misery, which is only a prelude to the eternal woe, if I do not repent. I will do so, O my Jesus! I will go home. I will seek again the ways of innocence and peace; and with Thy grace, I will never, never more desert them and Thee. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke* xi. 14—28.

Imagine you see Jesus exercising all the majesty of His power over the evil spirit, and expelling him perhaps by a word, a touch, a gesture, a glance, or a mere effort of His will, but without any display or ostentation.

I.

St. Matthew tells us, xii. 22, that this possessed person was blind as well as dumb;

and his condition well represents the state of a soul in mortal and obstinate sin. A soul in mortal sin is in the possession of the devil, for the grace of God is not there, the devil can see in it a counterpart of himself, and if the person were to die in that state, the soul would be the property of the devil, and would share his damnation for all eternity. It is also in the devil's possession, because in wilfully falling into mortal sin, or deliberately remaining in that state, the soul makes itself a slave of the devil; it does the devil's will instead of God's will. For a free man to be made by force a slave to an earthly master, is considered rightly to be one of the greatest misfortunes that could possibly befall him. What then must it be to be a slave of the devil! For a man *willingly* to enslave himself bodily to another, unless through some motive of divine charity, would be thought an inconceivable degradation. And if a man so gives up his freedom of spirit to another, that he will perform at his bidding the basest and most dishonourable actions, he is justly looked upon as one of the lowest

of mankind. And yet this is just what the soul does when it falls into, or remains in mortal sin. The only difference is that it surrenders itself to the devil instead of to a man.

II.

When thus in the devil's possession, it becomes blind, like the man in the gospel ; blind to the goodness of God and the beauty of virtue ; blind to the frightful state in which it is, as well as to the terrible consequences of being in that state. It is blind also as to the enormity of sin, and the horrible havoc which sin creates in it ; blind to its utter deformity ; blind to all its true interests ; blind to the attractions of God's grace. And there is danger of this blindness deepening and darkening, so that the soul may be utterly shut out from the influence of God's grace, and go forth to eternity in final impenitence. Let me examine my soul in time to cure it of spiritual blindness, if such exist in it.

III.

It is also dumb. It cannot pray ; prayer

has become distasteful and wearisome, and all the faithful, and confiding, and affectionate expressions it once made use of towards Almighty God, have died away from its lips. And the longer it remains in mortal sin, the more will it forget prayer. It is dumb also for asking advice from those competent to afford it on spiritual matters. It takes its own way, without asking whether it be the right way or not, and indeed without caring. It is dumb with regard to confession, either not approaching the Sacrament of Penance, or worse still, making bad sacrilegious confessions. It is dumb with respect to giving good advice to others, or speaking for the honour and glory of God and the salvation of souls. What a state for a man to reduce himself to willingly ! It would seem, at first sight, to be as hopeless as the case of one corporally blind and dumb ; but as in the latter case there was a means of cure, so in the former we may find one if we listen in time to the voice of our conscience, and yield to the urging of God's grace.

O my God ! Preserve me from ever falling into mortal sin, or if I should unhappily fall, give me grace to rise again. But what am I saying ? perhaps I am now in that dreadful state. I will examine my heart and my conscience, Dear Jesus ; I will lose no time, and I will seek to be delivered from my slavery, by hastening to make a good confession. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke* iv. 23—30.

Imagine you see Jesus taken to the brow of the hill to be cast down headlong, and so killed ; but mysteriously passing through the crowd, He goes His way.

I.

Reflect, by way of contemplation, on the anger and hatred of the Pharisees against our Dear Lord, and unite your heart in sympathy with His Sacred Heart. The Pharisees were like fierce wolves around the Lamb of God, who, all meekness and gentleness, stood so calmly in the midst of

them. If you observe Him well, you will see no resentment in Him, no disturbance of spirit, no eager haste to escape their fury, no fear, no gestures indicative of impatience, terror, or revenge. What a noble yet sweet object of contemplation is Jesus, so calm in the midst of the tempest of anger that is raging around Him. Not one angry word escapes Him, not a prayer to those men that they will not wreak their vengeance upon Him. Look into His Sacred Heart, and you will find it all on fire with the love of those very men.

II.

See what a contrast there is between Him and the Pharisees and others who fill the synagogue. They are all enraged, and filled with anger and hatred. Hear the confused sound of their voices filling the synagogue; some clamouring for His death, others mocking and deriding Him; and not one word of kindness, sympathy, or comfort addressed to Him. Truly, all His sorrows and pains of heart and mind were not in His passion alone. This scene was,

in some measure, a foretaste of that most bitter suffering to come. See their frantic gestures, their menacing hands, their attitudes of threat or of derision. And all this continues till they actually seize upon Him, and thrust Him out of His own city of Nazareth with rudeness and with insult. They take Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, and in a tumultuous crowd hurry around Him with the murderous intention of casting Him headlong from the height. If you were in that synagogue, and amid that crowd, would you side with the Pharisees or with Jesus? You say unhesitatingly, with Jesus. Your heart is struck with horror at the idea of taking part with those ferocious beings, rather wild beasts than men; and yet in your ordinary dealings with Jesus, how do you behave? When it comes to actually taking sides; your passions on one hand, and Jesus on the other; do you always, invariably join with Him? Do you never, for fear or love of anything or anyone else, go against Him by committing sin?

III.

Consider the simple, but most expressive words of the Evangelist, who says that, "He passing through the midst of them, went His way." There are few passages of Holy Scripture more striking than this description of Jesus passing through the midst of that infuriated Jewish crowd. He is in the midst of them, and suddenly He is gone. Behold their stupefaction at seeing Him no more there. They cannot tell how He has gone, nor whither. They look at each other in utter astonishment. Hear their hesitating enquiries, and perhaps their expressions of baffled rage. His time was not yet come, and He knew how to elude them by the exercise of His divine power. The contemplation of this scene should be to us a source of great encouragement, especially in these times, when the powers of the world are exercising their unholy strength against the Church of Christ. While so many voices are clamouring for its destruction, so many minds are set upon its ruin, let us

at least resolve to remain faithful, and thank God for His Providence over it.

O Jesus! I compassionate Thee in Thy sufferings, and I desire to unite my heart with Thine. Never will I take part with Thy enemies; never will I listen to the suggestions of evil, or choose sin in preference to Thy law. Though the whole world besides should be against Thee and Thy Church, I wish to proclaim my loyalty, and to maintain it to my last breath. Give me grace and strength to do so. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xviii. 15—22.

Imagine Jesus to be visibly before you and instructing you. How would you act in such a case? You would listen with all possible reverence, attention and devotion. He speaks to you by His written word, so listen to Him, and gather fruit to yourself.

I.

“If two of you shall consent upon earth

concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in Heaven." These words were addressed by our Dear Lord to the Apostles, but in their person they were spoken to all the Faithful. How wonderfully consoling they are! Take in their full meaning. "If two of you shall consent." This shows to us how beautiful and efficacious in the sight of God, is the concord of Christians. He loves order and unity. Disorder and discord are diametrically opposed to the Religion of Christ, who loves to see an union of Catholic hearts, because we are all His Brethren; we have the same faith, the same hopes, and the same object of love. We have similar trials and temptations, and we look forward to the same eternal enjoyment of Him. He would that we were one even as He and the Father are one. What charity then He wishes to see amongst us! And where it exists, how pleasing it must be in His sight, since He promises so great a reward to our concord. Let us examine ourselves upon our feelings towards others, and if we have any ill-will

or uncharitableness, let us be reconciled, and banish all rancour, that we may obtain the objects of our prayers.

II.

Consider the efficaciousness of true Christian concord, as shown to us by the unlimited comprehensiveness of Christ's promise. He says, "*Whatsoever* they shall ask, it shall be done to them." Of course this means whatever good and lawful thing they shall ask ; for God will never grant prayers for things that are unlawful. Again, our prayer must necessarily have the conditions of good prayer, that is, we must pray with faith, with hope, with humility, with earnestness, and with perseverance. We must also pray with all deference to the will of God, and to His infinitely superior wisdom ; for our own will is liable to be wrong, and we may oftentimes be mistaken as to what is best for us under any given circumstances. This is particularly the case with regard to temporal goods, for with respect to spiritual ones *in general*, we can scarcely go astray in our

judgment, though we may be mistaken in asking for *particular* spiritual goods, since what we pray for may possibly be not the best for us under the circumstances. Let us then resolve not only to be in concord and charity with others when we pray, but also to ask for everything on condition that it is according to the will of God.

III.

The special necessity for this consideration will appear when we reflect how often it happens that God does not seem to hear our petitions, and that the immediate object of our prayers is not granted to us. It is not that God does not hear us, or that He refuses to grant our prayers, but that He sees that we do not ask for what is best for us. He hears our prayers most graciously, and has regard to our sincerity, and so gives us something that we may not have asked for or expected, something that may even seem repugnant to our wishes, but still what He sees and knows to be better for us, and more beneficial to us than what we have prayed for. How

beautiful is entire submission to the will of God ; perfect conformity of our own will with His ! This makes us very like our Divine Model, and renders us very pleasing in the eyes of God.

Oh, my God ! give me perfect charity. Give me grace to pluck out from my heart every ill feeling towards any of my brethren. Grant me also grace to conform my will with Thine, that I may deserve to obtain the immense reward which Thou hast promised, even on earth, to those who pray well. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF
LENT.—GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xv. 1—20.

Picture to your mind our Blessed Lord near the Lake of Genesareth, and see the Scribes and Pharisees coming to Him from Jerusalem, to question Him about the practices of His disciples.

I.

Contrast the malice and falseness of the Scribes and Pharisees with the simplicity and truth of Jesus. Look into His face,

and into theirs ; see their captiousness, and eagerness to entrap Him ; and see how meekly He listens to them, and with how few simple, but telling words, He silences them. The Scribes claimed for themselves the criticism of new doctrines, and new teachers ; while the Pharisees made a profession of extraordinary sanctity, and most exact observance of the Law. The former were arrogant impostors, and the latter were hypocritical and exacting. They sent spies to listen to the teaching of Jesus, and to watch the practice of His disciples. Then they followed, and in their envy of our Dear Lord, put questions to Him, and took exception to His doctrine. Listen to the talk of these busy men, who pretended to know so much, and to be so very holy, and by contrasting them with Him, learn to love and admire Him more and more.

II.

How painful it must have been to Jesus to be so frequently beset by these men ! He saw into their very hearts and consciences, as He sees into mine at this mo-

ment. He knew precisely what they were worth, what they knew, and the exact value of their pretended holiness. He saw all the hollowness of their pretensions, their real wickedness, their uncharitableness, their ambition; and moreover He knew how all their malice and envy were brought to bear upon Himself; how He was the chief object of their hatred, and how they were seeking for a pretext to ruin Him. It is a part of His mission of suffering that He is to be troubled and tormented by them; and so, He does not shrink from meeting them. He suffers the torture of their presence and of their impertinence, sparing Himself no mental pain for the sake of us poor creatures. How painful and annoying it would be to me to have about me men whom I knew I could not trust, men whose falseness I had proved! And to be questioned by them, and to have my conduct contrasted with theirs, while I knew that they had no right to trouble me! The pain of Jesus was infinitely greater than any that I can feel, not only on account of His infinite know-

ledge of men's hearts, and of His infinite hatred of sin and hypocrisy, but also on account of the intensity of His will to suffer. O, Jesus! what hast Thou not gone through for me? And how very little in comparison I endure for Thy sweet sake!

III.

The Scribes and Pharisees accused the disciples of the breach of a mere ceremonial observance, while, as Jesus showed them, *they* were guilty of a breach of one of the commandments, setting it at nought for a tradition of their own. Similar conduct is characteristic of those who are fond of finding fault with their neighbours. Let us examine ourselves upon this point, and see what our conduct is. Are we much given to talking about our neighbours, and to criticising their words and actions? If so; is what we say or think generally to their advantage, and in their favour? Or is it usually against them? In this sort of talk, have we not a lurking wish to contrast their conduct with ours, in a sense favourable to ourselves, and to im-

press our hearers with an idea of our superiority either in knowledge or in goodness? And if we were to pursue this examination farther, and sincerely search into our own souls, should we not often, even generally, find that we have failings ourselves which are greater than those we blame? Nay, that we are worse than our neighbour in the very vices or defects which we reprobate in him? Let us learn a lesson of charity from observing its opposite in the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees as related in the Gospel.

I compassionate Thee, my Jesus, in enduring the torment of having sinners and hypocrites about Thee, and still more in the pain that I have given Thy loving heart by all my proud, pretentious, and uncharitable conversation. I humble myself before Thee, and pray with all the fervour of which I am capable, that I may take Thee for my pattern, that I may be cautious in my language, and never offend Thy Sacred Heart by my uncharitableness. I resolve, with Thy grace, to amend. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF
LENT.—GOSPEL.—*Luke* iv. 38—44.

Look upon Jesus Christ as the heavenly physician who comes to cure your soul of its infirmities, and imagine that you are presenting yourself to Him as a sick person who wishes to be healed.

I.

Jesus Christ, as God, has entire power over everything ; not only over the tangible things of His creation, but over the conditions under which those things exist. In His hands, and subject to His power, are distress and prosperity, sickness and health, and all the other states of being. In the examples placed before us in the Gospel of this day, we see Him exercising His right over all things as one having power. Picture Him to your mind as being besought by St. Peter's friends that He would cure his mother-in-law of the great fever which oppressed her; and then standing over her with unspeakable meekness, and, making no display of His majestic

power, commanding the fever as if it were a reasoning being, and an obedient subject of His authority. "He commanded the fever, and it left her." Short, and simple, and to the purpose, are these wonderful words. There is a mere command, accompanied by a touch of the hand, as St. Matthew tells us (viii. 15); and the fever is gone. So instantaneously is the cure effected, that "immediately rising, she ministered to them." Admire the power of our Dear Lord, and endeavour to arouse in your heart a higher appreciation of Him. Admire also His loving kindness which listened at once to the request for this cure; and the comprehensiveness of His love, which did not stop here, but went on to heal "everyone" of those brought to Him, sick of divers diseases.

II.

Jesus was not only the heavenly physician of those who had the privilege of beholding Him on earth; He is also our physician, and His especial province is to cure the diseases of our souls. God knows

under how many diseases they suffer ; and it becomes our duty, if we would have our souls cured, to examine into their state, and find out their maladies. Our passions are a true fever of the soul. They torture and torment us, and allow us no rest. We desire to love and serve God, we even try to do so, but our life is a warfare with our passions, which are always upon us, agitating our souls, causing distress of mind, scruples, and what not. As the fever of the body is often caused by cold, so the fever of the soul frequently springs from slackness and negligence in the service of God. Relaxation of duty, and neglect of prayer, good works, and the sacraments, give strength to the passions, and make it more and more difficult for us to overcome them. We should not willingly do anything that we apprehended would give us a fever ; and ordinarily we omit no precaution to ward off from us so great a calamity. And yet we are so careless about our soul's health ! We do so many things calculated to give strength and vigour to our passions, and are so little cautious

about guarding against their influence! Let us examine ourselves as to our conduct.

III.

Jesus is ever ready to cure us if we will but apply to Him. He can give us a remedy to counteract the unwholesome influence of our passions. He places this remedy within our reach, and with all the tenderness of His love invites and urges us to make use of it. By the voice of His Church He is ever calling us to it. This remedy is nothing less than Himself; His own most precious body and blood in the adorable Sacrament of the altar. He Himself is a virgin, and the Son of a virgin; and His virginal flesh will subdue the burning of concupiscence. For His dear sake, let us hasten to apply this blessed remedy; and let us now, at this moment, resolve to approach the holy table as often as we can, and our director may think fit for us.

O, my Jesus! while I admire Thy goodness and Thy might, I am confused at the

sight of my own soul which responds so little to Thy mercy, and makes so little use of Thy power. By Thy grace this shall be so no longer. I know how many passions beset me, and will ruin me eternally, if I do not take the remedy which Thou offerest for the subduing of them. I will make use of this remedy. I will not neglect my duties of prayer, good works, and especially of receiving Thee in the most Blessed Sacrament. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* iv. 5—41.

Behold Jesus seated at the well; listen to His conversation with the Samaritan woman, and see what you can draw from His conduct to induce you to love Him more.

I.

How touching are those words about our Dear Lord that tell us that Jesus was "wearied with His journey." Imagine some true-hearted friend of yours, or per-

haps some dear and near relative whose affectionate heart loves you very dearly, and think of such a one far from home, wandering through the country on foot, bearing the cold and the heat, hunger and thirst ; footsore and weary he sits by a roadside fountain, and begs a drop of water, for pity's sake, from the first comer. His journey is undertaken as an errand of kindness, and goodness, and charity, and no labour or fatigue is too great for his love. If you were to think of this your heart would be moved, and you would probably shed tears of sympathy and affection. But how much greater would your admiration be, when you came to know that he was undergoing all this painful journey and suffering for persons whom he knew would insult and reject him, and would even put him to death ? But there is yet another degree of pitying love at which you would arrive, when you thought that all this laborious travelling and painful endurance was for you ; and then, that you have so often forgotten it all, and have treated him as some one quite indifferent to

you, as one who did not care for you, and for whom you had no concern. In a moment of better thoughts, would not your heaving heart send up the bitter tears of remorse to your eyes? And if you could see that friend would you not clasp him to your heart, and pour out protestations of gratitude and of undying love? Would you not wish that you could make some great sacrifice in order to express the intensity of your feelings? Shall it be otherwise with Jesus?

II.

Jesus did and suffered all this for you. You who read this page, and I who write it, were in His mind and in His heart all the while, clearly and distinctly; and He did all for each one of us, just as much as if each one existed alone in the world. Is it possible that the Son of God should be wearied and wayworn for my sake? That for me He should have to beg for a draught of water? Yes, He is the faithful friend who never spared Himself for my sake; who loves me with an eternal love; who on that

particular journey, and during that particular weariness, thought of me, not as mixed up with the mass of mankind, and forming but an atom in the multitude, but of me individually and personally. Oh! my Jesus I have no friend like Thee. Oh! that I could be as faithful to Thee as Thou hast been to me!

“Quærens me sedisti lassus,
Redemisti crucem passus;
Tantus labor non sit cassus!

Thou hast sat weary seeking me,
Redeemed me dying on the Tree;
Let not such labour fruitless be.”

III.

Consider the kindness and condescension of Jesus. He knew that the woman who came to the well was a Samaritan, and, as such, that she would not speak to Him, a Jew. And therefore He, breaking through the custom and prejudice of His nation, spoke to her first. He also knew that she was a sinner, living even then in a sinful state, and yet, in His desire for her conversion, He did not disdain to converse

with her. His gentleness won her to God. She confessed her sin, and believed in Him, and induced others to go to Him who afterwards believed also. See the good effects of gentleness and kindness for poor sinners. Those who sincerely desire to convert others to the Truth or to virtue, will imitate our Dear Lord, and will remember that every unkind or bitter word is but putting another obstacle in the way of their coming to God.

The more I think of Thee, and study Thee, O Jesus! the more I feel my heart impelled to love Thee. I really and truly desire to love Thee with my whole heart and soul; do Thou give me grace that so my desire may be crowned. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* viii. 1—11.

Picture to yourself Jesus in the Temple, and the poor sinning woman placed before Him covered with shame and confusion. See how gently He deals with the helpless

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sinner, and turns the accusation upon the hypocritical accusers.

I.

There is much in the scene here represented to us to make us love our Dear Lord very much. It comes home very nearly to us; for although we may not have been guilty of the very crime of which the poor woman was accused, still, when we stand before our Lord, that is when we pray to Him, or when we recall His sacred presence, we must feel that we are before Him as poor, miserable sinners. We know more of Him than the woman did. We know that He is the spotless Lamb of God, the very essence of purity and holiness, in whose sight the very heavens are not clean. And if we look into our souls, shall we dare to say that we are fit to be before Him? The very thought of our unworthiness would be enough to keep us from Him, were we not reassured by the study of His character, and by such instances of merciful regard for poor sinners as the one recorded in this day's gospel. He has not a word of re-

proach for the softened sinner. He even stoops down, and writes with His finger on the pavement, lest by looking at her He might embarrass and confound her. O sweet compassion of Jesus, Who came, not to judge and condemn, but to heal and to save !

II.

Consider how, instead of reproaching the accused woman, Jesus looks at her accusers, and utters those words that must have burned into their very consciences :— “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” What a lesson is here for ourselves ! Let us imagine Jesus saying to us, “Do not be hard upon others, unless you can lay your hand upon your heart, and declare before God, the angels, and men, that you are without sin.” This is practically His language to us, and this is what He would wish to teach us by what He said to the Scribes and Pharisees. Do we attend to His teaching ? Are we not, on the contrary, only too ready to accuse, to blame, and condemn others ; and

to take pleasure in hearing their failings exposed, in listening to tales and scandals, either true or false, against our neighbour, without a moment's reflection on our own guiltiness? Many persons think that they may talk as uncharitably as they please of another, provided that what they talk about is true. But this is the sin of detraction, and it is totally inconsistent with the charity of Christ. Oh! that we, who profess to be His followers, were more like Him! How many sinners we might convert to Him by a little kind consideration! And how much good is prevented by untimely harshness and cruelty! If we had a true sense of our own unworthiness, our own sins and weakness, we should not blame others with bitterness; and if we had occasion to reprove them, it would be done with charity and gentleness, and souls would be gained to God.

III.

When Jesus had uttered those words to the Scribes and Pharisees, He again averted His face, and wrote upon the

ground. They, conscience-stricken and confounded, went away one by one, until "Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst." It was then that He lifted Himself up, and looking at her, spoke to her, assuring her of His forgiveness; for unless He had forgiven her, He must have condemned her. He, doubtless, infused contrition into her heart, for, without that, He could not have forgiven her. It is when the soul is alone with God that good thoughts arise in it, the enormity of sin becomes apparent, and sorrow finds its place in the heart. What is it to be alone with God? It is ever keeping His presence before the eyes of the soul. It is a sense of individual responsibility to God as if we were the only creature in existence. It is the habit of examination of conscience, of prayer, and of meditation. It is the banishing the consideration of all inferior things and motives, and giving ourselves up undistractedly to God. It is then that God speaks to the heart, and sends into it His holy inspirations. It is then that we can really gather spiritual fruit from our com-

munion with God, that we can learn to repent of our sins, and to make good resolutions for the future, and so deserve to hear from Him the words, "Go, and now sin no more."

How sweet and amiable Thou art, Dear Jesus, to poor sinners, trying to allure them to virtue by Thy gentle compassion and tenderness! What regard Thou hast for the weakness of humanity! Let me learn a lesson of humility as regards myself, and of charitable consideration for my neighbour. Who am I that I should presume to cast a stone? Do Thou aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* vi. 1—15.

Picture to yourself our Blessed Lord flying from the popularity which He had acquired, and hastening all alone to the mountain.

I.

Our Dear Lord had performed the wonderful miracle of feeding five thousand

men, besides women and children, as St. Matthew tells us, with five loaves and two fishes. And, even after they were satisfied, there remained fragments sufficient to fill twelve baskets. The stupendous nature of this miracle so worked upon the minds of the people, that acknowledging His divine power, they exclaimed : "This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world." And they would have proclaimed Him King. They wished to take Him by force and make Him their sovereign. Jesus Christ performs a greater wonder in our regard when He feeds, not five thousand, but all the Faithful who will, with His most Sacred Body and Blood in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. And that not once, but as often as we choose to approach Him ; nor in the desert (Matt. xiv.), but amid the busy haunts of men, in a half-hour that we can snatch away from our ordinary pursuits of business or pleasure, if we will. And yet how little do we think of this wondrous food which He keeps ready for us ! How little of the immensity of the love which urges Him to dwell under the Eucharistic

form in our churches, that He may be always there for those who come, and that He may be carried thence to feed and cheer the sick and dying, and give them this pledge of everlasting glory! Surely He deserves to be our King; to be proclaimed by us the Lord and Sovereign of our souls; not with our mind and our lips alone, but with all the true allegiance of our hearts, and all the deep fidelity of our affection. He is our King and Lord in reality, we cannot prevent that; but let us confess it, and let us act as if we believed that He has a right to our loyalty.

II.

When Jesus knew that they would come and make Him king, He fled away from them. He sought no worldly honour and distinction. He who was and is for ever the King of Heaven and earth, sought in this world no other crown than one of thorns, no other sceptre than a reed, no royal robe but the purple cloak cast upon Him in derision, no kingly title but that which should be written above His head on

Calvary. He shunned distinction as men shrink from insult or misfortune, and fled from it as a man will fly from his enemies. Let us contrast the conduct of Jesus with our own, ever remembering that all that He did was for our instruction. Do we shun honours and distinctions, in imitation of our Divine Master? Do we despise a fleeting popularity? Are we not, on the contrary, vain of any elevation above our fellow men? This vanity will lead us into many serious disorders if we are not very careful to check it. If we were to give it full liberty, it would lead us to be proud, and haughty, and contemptuous towards others. It would lead us to ambition fatal to charity, and even to justice. How many men have risen in worldly honour at the expense of others' happiness! It may, perhaps, be our case not to be in such a position as to give us hopes of rising high in the world's esteem; still, are there not many trifles which cause us to be vain? Let each one look into his own heart, and examine his own conduct. This is very necessary, for our vanity is so great,

that we are always apt to consider and criticise what our neighbour does, and to think our own conduct perfection. Or if not perfection, at least something that deserves considerable appreciation. How many vexations should we save ourselves if we could learn not to be vain, besides imitating and pleasing the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

III.

There is something singularly touching in the sight of our Dear Lord fleeing from the face of men, plunging into the mountain recesses, and hiding Himself alone; and then casting Himself upon His sacred knees, and praying to His Eternal Father. What thoughts passed through His Sacred Heart! Thoughts of burning love; and of longing desire for the accomplishment of the Divine Will, as He knelt there in solitude. We can imagine the wild animals peering at Him round the rocks, and among the leaves; and perhaps the birds of the air, fearless of Him, singing their joyous hymns around Him. There He remained till the fourth watch of the night,

when His love urged Him to seek His disciples, and He went to them walking on the sea. Solitude is very advantageous to the soul that would unite itself to God by prayer ; and all the true servants of God, the Saints whose lives are set before us as examples, have loved solitude. Some have fled, like our Lord, to the desert ; some have sought the cell of the monastery ; while others, whose apportioned lot has been to mix with the busy world, have found their moments for solitary prayer and contemplation in the retirement of their chamber, or in visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Let us seek for such quiet moments now and then, when we may speak to God, and think of God ; and when He will speak to us.

O my Jesus ! Thou shalt be my king, indeed. Thy will shall be my law. I will prize Thy will above all things. Rather let me die than forget or forfeit my allegiance to Thee. I will, with Thy help, check and keep down my vanity, and I will seek Thee from time to time in silence and in solitude, so that nothing may distract my

thoughts from Thee. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* ii. 13—25.

Place yourself in spirit at the feet of Jesus Christ; look up to Him as your teacher in the spiritual life, and endeavour to take all advantage of the lessons He gives you.

I.

We have already considered a similar scene to that narrated in the Gospel for this day, when we meditated upon the passage taken from the 21st chapter of St. Matthew; and we then compared the Temple of Jerusalem to the Christian soul in which God loves to dwell by His grace. Let us now consider the supereminent sanctity of a Christian church, and how far its holiness is superior to that of the Jewish temple. To hearts that love Jesus Christ that superiority is at once apparent, when they remember the

real and adorable Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus Christ makes the church His home ; it is His own house, His dwelling place, that we visit when we visit a Catholic church. He receives us under His own roof, where He has prepared for us a banquet such as angels have never partaken of, in which our souls are fed with His most sacred Body and Blood. Take away the Blessed Sacrament from a Catholic church ; the house remains, it is true, but the Master is gone, and a sense of desolation seems to reign throughout ; a desolation which is almost felt, even though we may not see that the tabernacle is open, and the light extinguished. There is no longer any centre around which the minor sanctities of the church may group themselves ; no longer that loadstone which was wont to draw to itself the homage and affection of faithful souls. But the Blessed Sacrament there, the poorest hovel becomes a heaven on earth. Oh ! let us love the church, the material church, if it be only for this.

II.

But, besides this, it is in the church that so many Sacraments are conferred. There, we are made children of God, Christians, and heirs of heaven by Holy Baptism; there is actual sin washed away in the sacrament of Penance, and Matrimony is sanctified. In the church are the images of the Blessed Mother of God, and of the Saints, the friends of Jesus. There we hear the words of eternal life, and assist at the tremendous mysteries. Moreover, the church is the palace of Christ's poor, from which no one can exclude them, and where they can kneel side by side with the noble and the rich at the altar, and where one considers oneself honoured by the proximity of the lowly and the humble. If the zeal of our Dear Lord was so much aroused by seeing the profanation of the Temple of Jerusalem, what must be His anger at the desecration of a Catholic church. Let us learn then to reverence and to love our church, and to banish from us every act and thought unworthy of His presence, and of the holiness of the place.

III.

Consider the concluding words of this day's gospel: "He knew what was in man." Jesus, by His own knowledge, which was divine, knew, and knows the hearts of all men. Whatever may be our outward appearance, our external acts, our words, He knows exactly what we are worth before God. We can cloak and conceal nothing from Him, however much we may impose upon men; and it is a tremendous thought that the eyes of an all-seeing Judge are ever fixed upon us, taking measure of us in every respect. And yet we are given to think much more of our neighbour's conduct than of our own. We can only judge of others by appearances, than which nothing is more deceptive; and while we are criticising, and perhaps condemning our fellow-creature in our own mind, we forget that there is One watching us, who does not judge by appearances, but who knows us most intimately, and who cannot by any means whatever be deceived in us. I will examine myself upon this head, and see

what my conduct is with regard to rash judgment of others, and also what it is in the eyes of God.

O my God! I will reverence and love the church, "the place where Thy glory dwelleth." And do Thou give me grace to carry out the resolution, which I now make in Thy presence, of so carefully guarding my conduct that Thou mayest see nothing in it displeasing to Thee, and of resisting the temptation to form unjust and rash judgments with regard to my neighbour. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* vii. 14—31.

Let us represent to ourselves Jesus teaching in the Temple; and let us see the dignity and holiness of His manner, and try if we can gather any lesson for ourselves.

I.

Admire the magnanimity of Jesus. He knew that the Jews sought to kill him, as we learn from the first verse of the chapter from which this day's gospel is taken, and

as we may gather from other passages in the same. Yet, though He had remained for a time, on this account, in Galilee, to teach us a lesson of prudence, about the middle of the feast He showed Himself publicly in the Temple, and began to teach. He had set out on His mission of teaching, and no sense of fear interposed to prevent Him from accomplishing His Father's will. The service of God will always require from us a certain degree of fortitude. The early Church was watered with the blood of martyrs; three hundred years ago our fathers in the Faith in this country had to be ready to undergo death rather than sacrifice their Faith; and much more recently they were subjected to grievous persecutions and penalties for the sake of their religion. Death is not now offered to us as the price of our fidelity, but, living as we do in the midst of bitter enemies to our Faith, we have numberless annoyances to put up with, insults to endure, misrepresentations to encounter; and what is worse than all, we have to hear so many blasphemies against all that we hold most holy. How do we bear our-

selves in the midst of all this? How do I endure insult, ridicule, and injury on account of my religion? Do I imitate the steady, quiet fortitude of Jesus? Or do I not lose my temper sometimes, and feel uncharitably towards my tormentors? Do I ever allow the fear of what others may say to hinder me from letting them know that I am a Catholic when God's honour calls for a profession of my faith? Do I ever shrink from any practice enjoined by the Church because of what may be said or thought of me? If I do, I do not come up to the standard of my model, Jesus Christ.

II.

There were two causes which, in this particular instance, gave our Lord such admirable magnanimity; 1st, He was ready to die at any moment, even though His death should be violent and painful; 2nd, He knew that the time appointed by His Father had not yet come. Do I feel that, even if I were assured that it was God's will that I should die now, I could lie down and expire without fear, and without regret

for anything that I should leave behind me? Am I ready to appear before my Judge? Let me reflect upon this, and amend whatever may want correction. We should all be in such a disposition that we would do our duty, even with danger of losing our lives; and with perfect confidence that God, if He sees fit and best for us, will rescue us from the danger.

III.

It is an instinct with us to admire magnanimity and fortitude when we see them exhibited in the conduct of others. Of all the qualities of man, perhaps this is the one which calls forth the greatest expression of admiration. No one looks with favour upon cowardice and weakness of spirit. When a man yields to pusillanimity, he becomes an object of contempt, and to none more so than to those who have extorted it from him. Whereas, on the other hand, courage and high-mindedness receive their reward of praise even from the bitterest enemies. We shall gain nothing with either God or man by yielding to a

cowardly fear. If even physical courage receives its reward of applause, how much more deserving of admiration is the moral courage which enables us to overcome, and make nothing of human respect? But besides this, we require moral courage to enable us to carry out our duty in spite of *ourselves*. We must despise the opinions and prejudices of the world, but we must attack our own evil inclinations with a vigorous and unsparing hand. This demands a high degree of moral courage. We become cowards in the face of our natural sloth in regard of spiritual things, or when our duty demands a sacrifice of a little ease or pleasure, when we have to curb the strength of our passions, or to give up anything or any one who is in the way of our salvation. How dignified is that soul which goes calmly on in the path of strict duty, no matter what obstacles lie in the way! It becomes very like its Divine Model, Jesus Christ.

O my Lord and Saviour! give me courage in the performance of my duty. I will never be ashamed of Thee, nor of Thy

Religion. I will never fear anything that the world can bring against me. I would rather die ten thousand times than commit one mortal sin. Give me grace to persevere in my good resolutions. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF
LENT.—GOSPEL.—*John ix. 1—38.*

Imagine that you are among the witnesses of the wonderful miracle related in this day's Gospel; that you see our Dear Lord, hear His words, and behold His actions.

I.

It was just after Jesus had passed out of the Temple as narrated in the last verse of the preceding chapter, that He saw the man who had been blind from his birth. This man was not only blind, but no doubt, in consequence of his blindness, was also a beggar. How little could he have anticipated that the day would come when the Son of God, become man, should give him the faculty of seeing, which he had never

possessed, and thus confer upon him the means of raising himself from his state of beggary. By original sin, we are all born blind ; the whole human race, by Adam's fall, were reduced to a state far worse than corporal blindness and beggary ; and the only begotten Son of God, seeing our condition, took pity on us. He became like one of us, thus passing by our way, in order that He might rescue us. Which of us could, by the greatest effort of imagination, have devised the way by which we were to be cured and saved ? Not all the wisdom of philosophers and sages ; not even the insight into God's ways possessed by saints could have dared to anticipate so wondrous a means as the Incarnation. Not the luminous sagacity of the Angels, who are enlightened by the very light of God's throne, could have contrived such a plan of salvation for man as that the Son of God should become man, and suffer and die to compass it. God has greater depths of love than man or angel could have thought of. Let us wonder at the abyss of His love, and excite our souls to make Him the

return which He desires, namely, the return of our love.

II.

Notwithstanding the clearness of the evidence, and the simplicity of the proofs of this striking miracle, the Jews would not believe either it, or the truth of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, with insulting words, they told the man that he might be the disciple of Jesus, but that they were the disciples of Moses. Were they wilfully blind? Or was their blindness judicial, that is, a punishment for their sins? Whichever it was in their case, let us be careful that we never shut our eyes to the light of God's grace, and thus become wilfully blind. Have we ever shunned the knowledge of God's will in our regard? Have we ever felt that we would rather not know what God wished us to do or to be, lest His will should be contrary to our inclinations? Have we ever put away from us the consideration of God's will as a troublesome thought, because the following of it would involve some sacrifice, or even

some slight inconvenience? Let us examine into this; and let us be very cautious lest resistance to God's will on our part should draw down upon us the punishment of spiritual blindness, which, unless in most exceptional cases, will lead to final impenitence.

III.

Consider those words of Jesus: "I must work the works of Him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." The time of our lives is the day in which we must work, and merit the glory which endures for ever. Our death is the night when we can no longer do anything towards our salvation. Jesus did the works of Him that sent Him, and so, all that we do during our lives should be in accordance with the will of God. Our works should be His works. Should we dare to call everything that we do, God's work? Can we conscientiously say that, even in a general way, we intend to do nothing but what God wishes us to do, and in the manner in which He wishes us to do

it? Could we bear that Jesus should visibly pass by, and see us, and be seen by us, in all our actions? Yet He does see us always, and under every possible circumstance. If there be anything to correct, let us set about it at once; for the night cometh. Our death will soon be upon us. Dear Lord Jesus! So merciful and so good! I will never close my eyes to Thy grace. I will always try to find out Thy will by a rigorous examination of myself, and by consulting and following the advice of my director. I grieve for having so often acted against Thy will; and I will begin now, with Thy grace, to do Thy will, that when the night comes for me, I may be found ready. Do Thou aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF
LENT.—GOSPEL.—*Luke* vii. 11—16.

Imagine yourself to be among the crowd near the gate of the city of Naim, and that you see the meeting between Jesus and the sorrowing widow, and all that takes place on this wonderful occasion.

I.

This was a meeting of life and death. Jesus the true Life, accompanied by His disciples and a great multitude, encounters the dead body of a young man, followed by his weeping mother, who was a widow, and many people of the city who went with her out of sympathy and consideration. The moment that Jesus sees her He shows His compassion for her. His Heart was so full of love for man that the first sight of distress called forth a manifestation of sympathy from Him. Hear his kind and gentle voice as He says to her, "Weep not." And see Him touch the bier, and command the dead body to rise again to life. See how the eyes open, and look around. See how the blood once more circulates, and colours the cheeks, and how he that was dead sits up, and begins to speak. But Jesus has not yet done all for that poor widow, He gives her once more the son whom she had lost. Oh! what joy for that widowed mother's heart! Enter into the feelings that would be excited in you, if you actually beheld this scene.

How your heart would warm with love towards Jesus, so that, if you had not been with Him before, you would join Him now.

II.

The dead man was a young man, like any other young man. He had been full of life, of energy, of spirit. He had had his companions and his friends, his admirers, and perhaps his enemies. Doubtless, like other young persons, he had looked forward to many years of life, and to much enjoyment. On the other hand, his mother had loved him dearly. He was her only son; and had considered him as her hope and stay, the support and the joy of her age. Probably, neither of them had anticipated an early death for him. Yet death came in the midst of his youth, and carried him away. Whatever had been their thoughts, neither of them could ever have imagined that when death had once come, the Lord of life and death would restore him to life, and to his mother.

How vain are all the promises I have made to myself of the enjoyment of life! I

may be young, and thoughtless, with regard to serious matters, looking forward to many years in the world, yet God alone knows if I shall be alive this time next year, this day next week, this hour to-morrow. Certain it is that when my death does come, the years that have passed will appear very, very short. My death must come soon; for what are a few years of time compared to the endless ages of eternity; and it will be by the standard of eternity that I shall measure and judge of things when I come to die. Another thing certain is—that I cannot expect a stupendous miracle to be wrought that shall raise me to life again; and even so, as in the case of the young man in the gospel, I could only look for a few years of renewed life. Death would come at last, and finally. Do I think enough of death, of the certainty and the speed of its coming, and of the utter uncertainty of the time, place, or manner of my death?

III.

A soul that has lost the grace of God,

that is, a soul in mortal sin, may be compared to a dead body that is being carried out to be buried. The Church weeps and laments. Jesus meets it, and approaches it by inspiring it with remorse. He touches the bier by the numberless means which, through the ministry of His Church, He places before it for its resurrection from the death of sin. He says to it, "Arise." And yet, notwithstanding the dear compassion of Jesus, how many souls deliberately choose to remain dead, that is, remain wilfully in sin, and reject the means of the sacraments, &c., which Jesus and His Church offer. What must be the consequence? They will be carried to the grave, that is, they will be buried in hell. And all through their own fault; for there is nothing wanting on the part of our Lord. He has done all that He can. Oh! what a sad frustration of the loving efforts of Jesus and His Church! What irreparable, never ending loss!

I love Thy dear compassionate Heart, O my Jesus! And I will do all in my power to correspond with Thine infinite goodness which, by Thy Church, gives me such effi-

cacious means of rising from the death of sin. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John xi. 1—45.*

Realize to yourself the wonderful scene of Jesus going with tears and groans, accompanied by the weeping sisters, by His disciples, and a crowd of people, to the grave in which the dead body of Lazarus was laid; and hear him pronounce, with a loud voice, the words, "Lazarus, come forth." Then see the dead man arise, and come forth, still bound in the grave-clothes.

I.

Jesus weeping, the tears coursing down His sacred cheeks, is a moving spectacle. Even the Jews, who did not believe in Him, said, "Behold how He loved him." And can we, who know with a certain faith, who and what He was, look on unmoved? Jesus wept with grief, with affection, with sympathy, and with earnestness. Contemplate Him in His affliction, and try to enter

into the sentiments which filled His dear Sacred Heart. Yesterday we saw how He restored an only son to his mother ; to-day we behold Him giving joy to the affectionate hearts of the two sisters, by the restoration of their brother. Ever kind, ever compassionate Jesus ! If Jesus wept out of love for His friend, and out of sympathy with the afflicted sisters ; if He grieved over mere temporal distress and loss, how much more must His pure Heart have sorrowed over sin, the occasion of eternal loss and woe. Have I ever given Jesus occasion to grieve over me ? Have I ever been dead, and buried in sin by losing the grace of God, and giving myself up to utter forgetfulness of Him ? Let me reflect upon my conduct, and grieve from my heart for all the pain which Jesus has suffered on my account. It will be a wholesome grief if I can mingle my tears with those of Jesus, for it will make me love Him more.

II.

Hear how our Dear Lord gives thanks to His eternal Father for having heard Him :

“Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard me.” This is a great lesson for us who think so little of the prayer of thanksgiving. We are ready enough to ask for favours, and are even tempted to murmur if our requests are not at once heard or answered. When a favour is granted, we are very apt to take it as if it were our due, and to forget the giver. When our prayers are heard, we rejoice indeed, but too often neglect to thank the good God who has heard them. And how many good things, both spiritual and temporal, do we not receive without having had even the slight trouble of asking for them? God, out of the abounding fountain of His love, has deluged us with favours. He gave us life, brought us into His Church by baptism, preserved us through many dangers to soul and body. Health, ease, happiness, and a thousand other blessings have been conferred upon us by Him. All that we have of good is from His hand. We know this; and yet if we ask ourselves how often we think of returning Him thanks, we shall find very much reason to

be ashamed of our thoughtlessness and ingratitude. Let us make it a rule to thank God daily, not only for ourselves, but for His goodness to all the world. It is a good practice to have the custom of very frequently saying from our hearts, "Thank God!"

III.

Consider how Jesus goes on to say that He gave thanks thus publicly on account of the people standing about, that they might believe that the Father had sent Him. Here we see how Jesus seems to forget Himself, and the favour which His Father was about to confer upon Him, in His all-absorbing desire for His Father's glory, and for the salvation of mankind. It was no new thing for Jesus to be heard by His Father:—"Thou hearest me always." Neither was it a new thing for Him to make the prayer of thanksgiving. But now that the miracle of raising one from the grave was about to be performed, He knew that many would believe that the Father had sent Him, and thus would give

honour and glory to the Father, and save their souls, and He lifts up His sacred eyes to Heaven, and thanks Him.

Is our first and dominant thought one of desire for the honour of God, and our own and our neighbour's salvation? Do we always offer up our actions to God? Do we think sufficiently that we came into this world for no other purpose than to love and serve God here, that we may reign with Him for ever hereafter?

O God of all goodness! How often have my sins afflicted the Sacred Heart of Jesus! How great has been my ingratitude! By Thy grace it shall be so no more. I thank Thee from my heart for all that Thou hast done for me. I thank Thee for the trials and crosses Thou hast sent me, because Thou knowest that they are good for me. I thank Thee for all the world. May all my thoughts, words, and actions tend to Thy glory, and to the salvation of myself and others. Do Thou aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* viii. 12—20.

It was after absolving the woman taken in adultery that Jesus continued His teaching in the Temple. Consider Him sitting there surrounded by crowds of Jews, and attentively hear the words of heavenly wisdom that proceed from His sacred lips.

I.

“I am the light of the world.” These are the words of Jesus Christ to the Jews, who hated Him, and who pretended to see in His doctrine nothing but falsehood and darkness. They were not addressed to the Jews alone, but to us also. Let us learn from them what we may. Jesus is our light. What does this mean? It is He who through His Church teaches us the way of eternal life, and is thus the light of our journey through this world. They who know not the Church are in darkness. They seek for the light of Christ, but they cannot find it, for they have no guide. They have proclaimed the Holy Scriptures

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to be their guide; but who shall explain the Holy Scriptures to them? Each one takes his own interpretation, and thus they fall away from one another, and go on by different paths. Scarcely two of them agree even with regard to fundamental truths. Some even, by their private study of the Holy Scriptures, fall into utter disbelief. Out of the Church all is discord with regard to matters of Faith; but, as we know by our own experience, we may go where we will, and we shall find all members of the Catholic Church agreeing in one Faith. How admirable is this union in doctrine, which brings to bear on our souls the true light of Jesus Christ! Let us learn from this contrast to love the Church most devotedly, and to thank God, that, through no merit of our own, and out of His most infinite love and mercy, He has brought us within her pale.

II.

Jesus is not only our light by His doctrine, but He is our light by His consolations. When times are darkest with us;

when we are in the deepest affliction, we know that we can seek and find comfort in the arms of our loving Lord. And how is this done? By offering to Him our trials and crosses in union with his bitter pains of soul and body, and by accepting them as a punishment for our past sins, and as a corrective for the future. It is also a great source of consolation to know that God chastises those whom He loves, and that therefore the darkness of the hour of trial is a pledge of His regard, and a prelude to the dawn of His light upon our souls. We also know how to find comfort in tribulation by a devout approach to Him in prayer and meditation. The thought of the darkness of His Passion will bring to us the light of His sympathy; for He has known suffering, and feels intensely for those that suffer. The humble practice of the Christian virtues for His dear sake brings the light of His consolation to us; not through that sensible satisfaction that we may be tempted to find in it, but through the grace which we draw down upon ourselves by an imitation of Him as far as lies

in our power. Above all, the devout approach to the Sacrament of Penance, and the reception of His most blessed Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, where we feed our souls upon Him, and absorb the delights of His grace and love, enlighten our sorrowing hearts; and the "pledge of future glory" assuages the pain of present distress. Do we thus seek our consolation? If we do not, or have not up to this time, we will begin now.

III.

Consider the condition on which Jesus promises us His light, namely, that we follow Him. What has been our custom? Have we not very often indeed followed everything but Jesus? The vanities and frivolities of the world, the enjoyments of every day, the guilty pleasures of life, thoughtless or wicked company, laziness and sensual indulgence, all call upon us to follow them. They constantly say, "Follow me," and they promise us happiness, but they never can give it. The true Catholic heart will soon find out their hollowness—

will feel the bitter remorse which they leave, and will find nothing but darkness, where all appeared to be light. Let us listen only to the voice of Jesus who is still saying, "Follow me." Let us hasten to His side, if it be only out of compassion for Him crying so often in vain, "Follow me." To follow Him is to keep His commandments, to live in purity and holiness of life, to correspond with all the suggestions of His grace, to avoid all evil, and to do all the good we can. I profess to be a follower of Jesus, am I so in reality? I will examine my conscience now.

O Jesus! I thank Thee from my heart for having in Thy goodness brought me into Thy Church; give me grace, I beseech Thee, to be a worthy member of that Church, and a true follower of Thee, as I now resolve to be, that so I may deserve to obtain the light of eternal life. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

PASSION SUNDAY.

GOSPEL.—*John* viii. 46—59.

Listen to Jesus speaking the words of eternal truth to the Jews, and see them, instead of accepting His gracious call, reviling Him, accusing Him of being possessed by the devil, and taking up stones to cast at Him.

I.

How Jesus loved the Jewish people, to whom He was sent by His eternal Father! This is only one out of so many instances during His life in which He spoke to them of the truth, and they would not hear a word. It was like speaking to rocks or trees, or to dumb, unreasoning animals. Still, ever intent upon His sacred mission, He preached without ceasing, as though He would not lose one chance of working upon their stony hearts. Their threats did not deter Him; their abuse had not any more effect on Him than their scorn and ridicule. How admirable is this perseverance of our Divine Lord! How worthy

of our homage and love is this zeal for His Father's glory, and for the salvation of the souls of men! Let me reflect upon it, and see if my conduct is like His. Do I not grow faint-hearted at the least opposition to my spiritual progress; and do I not too often give way when the people about me are inclined to abuse me for my religion, and my religious observances, or when they bring scorn and ridicule to bear upon me?

Jesus not only bore it all, but was most calm under it. Do I not frequently lose patience, and become ill-tempered and angry, when men speak abusively or jeeringly of what I hold to be most holy? I thus lose many a chance of gaining souls to God. The vulgar insolence of the Jews is very often repeated by those who blindly hate our Faith. When such occurs to me, I will think how Jesus conducted Himself in similar circumstances, and I will behave as He would have done.

II.

The Jews accused Jesus of having a devil, that is, of being possessed. How grievous

it must have been to the Author of all good to be accused of being possessed by the Spirit of evil! What a blasphemy this was against Him who could fearlessly ask, "Which of you shall convict me of sin?" Think of Jesus, the pure, innocent Son of the Eternal Father, accused of being under the influence of the devil, and of teaching diabolical doctrine. I, unlike Him, have committed many sins. Can I count my sins? And yet, when I am accused of a fault, my pride immediately rises up, and my indignation is roused against my accuser. I cannot bear to have the least fault laid to my charge, nay, I cannot endure that even my judgment should be questioned. When I am accused of faults that I have not committed, let me reflect that, if I am guiltless of them, still I am guilty in many, many ways, and that, if men knew me as God knows me, I should deserve universal reprobation and scorn. And, after all, it is very seldom that I shall be accused as deeply as my Dear Lord was.

III.

Think of Jesus in His holiness, His meekness, His wonderful, unfailing charity. Think of His Sacred Person; look upon His countenance so unruffled; gaze into His eyes which beam forth the purity of His soul, and the burning ardour of His charity. And then see the countenances of those wretched men who in their hatred and malice take up stones to cast at Him. What a contrast there is between those perverse and wicked people, and the innocent Lamb of God! If you were to see a dear friend whom you prized for his love to you, and for his own goodness, thus chased away, and obliged to hide himself, threatened by the coarse voices and violent gestures of an angry and unreasoning mob, what would be your thoughts? If you could rescue him, you would. If not, your very heart would burst for the sake of your friend. Shall it be otherwise with Jesus, the truest friend you ever had or can have? Recollect that He suffers this, not only being your friend,

but precisely because He is your friend. And can you refuse Him the least service you can render Him, namely, the consolation of your sympathy? Oh! my Jesus! I will go farther; I will not give Thee a barren sympathy alone, but I will so love Thee, and I will so sincerely repent of my past sins, that I will take away, as far as I can, the additional bitterness which they gave to all Thy sufferings.

Oh! Thou Lamb of God! Thou that takest away the sins of the world! Give me grace and strength to bear all things for Thy dear sake. I never can, in this world, suffer all that my manifold sins deserve. I love Thee so much that I offer myself to Thee to suffer for Thy name's sake, and in order to prove to Thee how truly I love Thee. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

MONDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* vii. 32—39.

Imagine you see our Blessed Lord standing before the ministers of the chiefs

of the people, and the Pharisees, who were sent to seize His Sacred Person, as if He were a malefactor. Contemplate Him, and the Divine serenity of His presence, and learn what lessons you may from His conduct and His words.

I.

Consider how the chiefs and the Pharisees, in their malice against Jesus, determined to put an end to His teaching; and with this view, sent their servants to apprehend Him. His conduct and His doctrine were a reproach to them, besides being contrary to what they were teaching the people. They felt themselves rebuked by the purity and consistency of His life; for He enjoined nothing that He did not practise; and all His teaching was of the highest morality, and the most sublime truth; whereas they enforced the most exact obedience to the law in others, while their own hearts were filled with pride and uncharitableness. They could not help seeing how this consistency on the part of our Dear Lord was calculated to draw many to His side, and to force upon the

minds of men a contrast between Him and them. Whilst we admire our Lord, and conceive a detestation for the conduct of the Pharisees, let us examine and see whether our own conduct resembles most that of Jesus or of His enemies. Jesus is our model, and if we would be saved, we must endeavour to be like Him. And, besides this, we must remember that uncharitableness towards our neighbour is really uncharitableness towards Jesus Christ; for He has said that what we do to our neighbour we do to Him. When, therefore, we blame our neighbour, let us be careful that we ourselves are blameless. What thoughts this reflection calls up in our minds! It forces us to think of our own failings, and to resolve to correct them before we presume to throw blame on those whose outward actions we behold, but whose hearts we have no right to judge.

II.

This restriction with regard to our judgment of others is a maxim of the Christian Religion—"Judge not, and you shall not

- be judged." It was little understood by the Pharisees, who, because of their envy of Jesus, very quickly passed a judgment upon Him. We must not wonder, then, if people judge us, and place a construction upon what we do which is very far from being the true interpretation of our conduct. If this happen to us, we are only placed in the same position as Jesus Christ was. Our religion is vilified, calumniated, and misunderstood ; so was His. Our words are wrongly interpreted ; so were His. Our conduct is misrepresented ; His conduct was represented as that of a seditious blasphemer. It ought to be a great consolation to us to think that we are permitted to suffer, in however slight a degree, what He endured, and that we are made more like Him by having trials of a similar nature to His thrust upon our souls. But, in general, these things disturb us very much ; they make us uneasy ; they distract us in our duties and in our prayers ; and too often we allow them to excite in us uncharitable and vindictive feelings. This is because we do not at once reflect upon our Dear Lord,

and the bright example that He has shown us. Moreover, we have not the humility to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that the adverse judgments of men about us are very frequently correct, and nothing more than we deserve.

III.

Consider the words of Jesus Christ, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," which were spoken by Him on the last and great day of the festival, as we are told in this day's gospel. It is said that He *cried* them out, that is, uttered them with a loud and piercing voice, so that great numbers of the people might hear them. He wished to give them this last chance, as they were departing from the feast, of turning their attention to Him. Jesus is ever crying out to our hearts by the voice of His Church, by our consciences, and by His direct inspirations, in order to attract us to Him. We know not when the cry of our Lord may reach us for the last time. We are always uncertain whether or not the chance which we have

of repenting, or of advancing in virtue now, at this moment, is the last that we shall ever have. Let us reflect in time. Jesus knows how we are thirsting and longing for happiness ; and He tells us where alone our thirst can be slaked, namely, in Him. All happiness that is not sanctified by coming from Him, or by having Him for its object, is vain and false. Nothing but true religion can ever give us lasting happiness even in this world.

Oh! my Jesus, I am humbled when I think how often I pass severe judgments on others, and how very lenient I am to myself. I resolve, by Thy grace, to think more of my own failings, and to check myself when I am tempted to think or speak harshly of others. Give me grace also to seek, from this moment, all my happiness in Thee. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

TUESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* vii. 1—13.

See our Divine Lord wandering in Galilee because the Jews sought to kill Him, and

12—3

try to enter into the feelings of His Sacred Heart.

I.

Jesus avoided the Jews. He would not go into Judea because they wished to kill Him; and even when He went up to the feast of tabernacles, He would not go openly, "but as it were in secret." This was not because He dared not face His enemies, or because he feared suffering or shrank from death, but because the time appointed by His Heavenly Father had not yet come. See your loving Jesus, Jesus whom you at least profess to love, wandering like an outcast and a fugitive, with the knowledge that bloodthirsty men were anxious to seize Him and put Him to death. You individually were in His thoughts at that time. Is it possible, dear Lord, that Thou didst think of *me*, when cruel men were thirsting for Thy blood? When Thou wert an exile from the land of Thy birth? Ah! yes; the love of Jesus is so great that He has never forgotten me. I never could doubt for a moment that He could forget

me, and yet how seldom, and how little have I realised this wonderful fact ! If I realised it to myself as I ought, I should never cease to think of Him.

II.

The sensation of being sought for to be put to death is one of the most painful positions in which a man can be placed. Let us imagine ourselves in such a position, flying from justice, and fearful lest every step that we hear approaching us should be that of one who seeks us. Such terror would take possession of us that life would be a burden. Jesus was not flying from justice. His soul was spotless, and those who sought His life were the very men whom He came to save. How must the thought of the blind ingratitude of men have aggravated the pain of the knowledge that his life was sought ! How He loved those who wished to kill Him ! This knowledge was to Him a foretaste of His passion. It was the dark shadow of death hanging over Him ; and how acutely He felt it can never be known by mortal man,

because man cannot plunge into the depths of the soul of God made man. Yet we may, to some extent, enter into His feelings by imagining what our own would be in similar circumstances, and then trying to form some distant idea of the intensity of His feelings arising from the strength of His divine will to suffer, and from the infinite sensitiveness to suffering with which He had voluntarily clothed Himself. How much didst Thou suffer, dearest Jesus, for my sake, and how little I endure for Thee !

III.

The suffering of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was infinitely increased by His most perfect and intimate knowledge of the grievousness of sin, in general, and of the particular sin of the Jewish people in rejecting Him, and seeking to destroy Him. He knew how terrible this crime was in the eyes of His Eternal Father, and moreover, what a fearful chastisement it would bring upon the souls of His creatures, both in this world and the next. So, His dear soul was filled with the bitterness of sorrow

on account of men, and on account of the outrage offered to eternal Goodness. With these thoughts filling His heart, He walks in Galilee, and with the same thoughts, He sends His brethren to the feast, and then goes secretly Himself. Contemplate Him in all these passages of His life, and draw from the contemplation the reflections to which they naturally give rise. Do not let Him be alone and disconsolate. Be with Him in spirit and affection ; and resolve never to do anything which may separate you from Him. Especially resolve to correct some particular fault which keeps you at a distance from your loving Saviour.

My Lord ! Thou knowest that I desire to love Thee, and to make amends to Thee, as far as I am able, not only for the crime of the Jews, but still more for all the share that I had in the sufferings of Thy Sacred Heart. Oh ! give me grace to love Thee perfectly. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

WEDNESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* x. 22—38.

Consider Jesus in the character of the

Good Shepherd speaking about His sheep, and remember that you are one of His flock.

I.

“My sheep hear My voice,” says our Blessed Lord as He walks in Solomon’s porch, while the Jews crowd round about Him and question Him in their captious way. He had just told them that they did not believe in Him because they were not of His sheep, and now He says that His sheep hear His voice, that is, believe in Him, and accept all that He tells them. It is then a characteristic of the true sheep of Christ that they hear His voice and obey His word. How sweet and gentle is the voice of Jesus speaking to His sheep! And what a contrast there too often is between the heavenly Shepherd and those who profess to be His sheep! Sheep, if left to themselves, will wander away, and will go in search of new pastures, and at last lose themselves. So it is with us, if we are not true sheep of Christ, and do not obey His voice. Unless we hold fast all that Jesus has taught by His word, and

by His Church, we shall soon lose ourselves, and find our poor souls like sheep without a shepherd. This not only concerns matters of faith, but also the observance of the whole of the Christian law. Have I hitherto listened attentively to the voice of the Good Shepherd? Have I always done that which my conscience has told me I ought to do; and avoided that which the same conscience has proclaimed to be wrong? I know that I belong to the Fold of Jesus by being a member of His One, Holy, Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church; still, I shall be lost if I follow the dictates of my will and my passions, and do not act according to that conscience which God has given me.

II.

“I know them, and they follow me,” He goes on to say. What a thing this is that Jesus should know us, not vaguely, generally, and in a mass, but individually and personally! Then Jesus knows me, intimately and perfectly. I can conceal nothing from Him. He knows what special care has been bestowed upon me; what

graces I have received, and how I have corresponded with them. He knows how much good there may be in me, and how very much evil. What a consolation it is to the soul that is striving to love God to feel that Jesus the Good Shepherd is ever watching over it, knows all its trials and temptations, and all its struggles in the contest with the world, the flesh, and the devil! If Jesus knows me so well, ought I not to endeavour to know Him as far as I may in this place of exile? I will ever remember the knowledge that Jesus has of me, and of all that I think, and say, and do, and of all my ways, and every circumstance of my life; and I will try to arrive at a true knowledge of Him by daily meditation.

III.

The great inestimable reward that Jesus promises to His true and faithful sheep is the recompense of eternal life. Nothing less than this is in store for them. On the other hand, if eternal life is the reward of the good sheep, what but everlasting death is the punishment of those disobedient ones

of the flock, who follow the devices of their own hearts, and desert the true shepherd? Oh! what inexpressible woe it is to be separated for ever from Jesus, to be banished from the happy fields of Heaven to the arid, burnt-up desert of hell! On the other hand, what unutterable joy to feed for ever in the pastures of eternal life by the side of the Good Shepherd whose voice we have heard, and whose steps we have followed in this vale of our pilgrimage! Jesus, I love Thee as I see Thee talking to the Jews who do not believe Thee, and speaking also to my heart. But what is this? They take up stones to cast at Thee! I am not one of those, Dear Lord! I fly to Thy side to shield Thee from their rage, or to suffer with Thee.

Oh! Thou Good Shepherd! I wish to be one of the most obedient, gentle, and loving of Thy Flock. The world may think me a fool for remaining at Thy side, but I care not, so long as Thou regardest me with love and approval. Give me grace ever to remain faithful to Thee. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

THURSDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*Luke* vii. 36—50.

Imagine the scene related in the gospel of to-day; and represent vividly to your mind the persons, the actions, and the words.

I.

Consider our Dear Lord's kindness in accepting the invitation of a man who, by his profession, was among the enemies of Jesus. Look upon our Lord as He reclines at the table, and study His goodness. What gentleness and charity appear in His sacred countenance! What unassuming dignity in every gesture! In Him there is nothing which could give offence. The purity of holiness surrounds Him. What is my conduct when I am among my friends, especially on convivial occasions? Can I look back upon such scenes, and say that I never did, or said, or thought anything which I should wish to recall? That I never gave offence, bad example, or scandal? Consider also Magdalen full of love and veneration for our

Divine Redeemer now, though she had been a sinner. She had probably heard the divine admonitions of Jesus ; at all events, her heart was moved with repentance for her misdeeds, and she comes to Him for forgiveness. It is touching to see the wandering sheep thus come to seek her shepherd. What sorrow there is in her poor wounded heart ! What love for Him who alone can heal her soul ! Compare the two, Magdalen and Jesus ; perfect repentance, and perfect innocence. How near they come together, innocence and repentance ! How sweetly the divine innocence of Jesus takes the repentant sinner to its love ! Let us be very tender and gentle with sinners, that we may bring them to repentance.

II.

Magdalen came into the house of the Pharisee while they were at meat. The ardour of her desire for forgiveness made her break through the strict conventionalities of life ; she could not wait. Before all the guests she washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with her

hair; she kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment. Her desire for pardon was equalled by her wish to make public reparation for her public sins; and so she does not seek for reconciliation in concealment, but allows the overflowing grief and love of her heart to gush forth in the presence of all the company. She stood behind, and at His feet; ashamed, confused, and humbled at the thought of her sinful state, she shrank from looking on His face, and found at His sacred feet the proper place for her repentance. When conscience speaks to us, or remorse moves our hearts, do we seek *at once* to be reconciled to our Lord by the sacrament of Penance? Do we thus go to Him for pardon the moment that we find that we have done wrong? Do we even make an act of contrition? I will amend, Dear Jesus. Again; if we have given scandal or bad example, do we remember to make all the reparation that is in our power? Am I truly confused, and ashamed, and humbled, when I think of my many offences against God?

III.

Think of the words of Jesus, so full of kindness and tenderness towards the repentant Magdalen. There is not one reproach. Not one word to cause a painful feeling. On the contrary, Jesus enumerates her good actions, and expresses a most generous appreciation of each. He might have recounted her sins one by one to show the extent of His goodness in forgiving her ; but this would not have been in accordance with His loving ways towards repenting sinners. He leaves out the balance of sin, and only reckons up the sum of repentant acts. How sweetly the character of our Lord comes out in all this touching scene ! Sinners have here a great encouragement. Weak, foolish, wicked as we may be, Jesus is ever ready to forgive, the moment that we repent. His Church is like Him in this ; and all true Christian hearts will welcome and cherish the poor soul that has gone astray, but now returns to God's grace by sincere repentance. Let me learn to love Jesus

more and more for His goodness. Let me also resolve to endeavour more and more to have zeal for the salvation of souls, and in all my dealings with persons who have committed faults, to imitate the conduct of my Dear Lord.

Oh Jesus! Model of innocence! Give me the grace of sincere repentance. Let no consideration of human respect, or any other feeling, cause me to delay when I know that I have sinned. I resolve, O Lord, by Thy grace, to repent at once, and to confess my sins with love, humility, and sorrow. Give me also the great grace which shall teach me how to deal with those who have done wrong. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* xi. 47—54.

Imagine you see Jesus avoiding the Jews, and going with His disciples to Ephrem because they sought to kill Him.

I.

Consider the wickedness of the chief

priests and Pharisees, who assembled together in council against Jesus. To us it sounds terrible to say *against* Jesus, and yet, how much is done every day against Him! And by persons who call themselves Christians! All that is done against the law of God, and against His will, is against Jesus. Every time that we break a commandment; every time that we commit a sin, we conspire with the devil against Jesus. All the uncharitableness or injustice that we exhibit towards our neighbour is against Jesus. Whenever we scandalize anyone, and lead another into sin, it is all against Jesus. The neglect of parents with regard to their children, of superiors with respect to those placed under them, is against Him. The omission or disregard of the special duties of our state of life; the taking advantage of any position to oppress or injure others, is against Him. The making use of our talents to the injury of the faith or morals of others, by speaking, by writing, by the press, or by any other means, is all against Him. If those who are comparatively rich

despise or neglect the poor, it is being against Jesus. The refusal to observe, or the wilful omission to obey the commandments of the Church, is against Him. All the wild clamour of the world against the Church of Christ, and against His Vicar, is against Him. All the attacks made upon the Catholic Faith are against Him. How much has His Dear Sacred Heart to bear! Let me examine, and see how much of all this can be laid to my charge.

II.

The chief priests of the Jews and the Pharisees conspired against our Lord for a temporal consideration. They said, "If we let Him alone so, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation." Their opposition to Jesus in this instance arose from a mere worldly policy. They cared not if His doctrine were true or not; all they thought of was the stability of their nation; and because they were in dread of the power of Rome, they determined to seek the destruction of Him who came to preach the

truth to the world. Has this no analogy in the public history of our own times? Has it no counterpart in the private history of our own souls? For what are we ready to go against Jesus? Is it for some higher good? No; for we know that there is nothing higher or better; but we sacrifice Him and His interest to the lowest and most miserable considerations. We give Him up; we commit sin, for the sake of the world and its pride, and vanity, and empty glory. We commit sin to gratify the whim of a moment, or to satisfy the ambition of a life. We commit sin for a momentary delight, or for a hateful passion. Let me consider the wretched inducements that have led me to commit sin of whatever nature it may be, and see what part I have had in the mental sufferings of our Lord, when He went to the borders of the desert on account of His cruel persecution by the Jews.

III.

It was the goodness and the power of Jesus which raised up such bitter enemies

against Him. "This man doth many miracles," they exclaimed. What were the miracles of Jesus? Curing the sick, the lame, and the blind; raising the dead to life; changing water into wine, lest the friendly conviviality of a marriage feast should be spoiled; all indicative of His intense goodness and charity. Does this apply at all to me? Am I ever against Him on account of His goodness and power? Ah! yes; for were it not for that infinite goodness of His, I should not have the chance of sinning twice. If I had my deserts, I should have died after my first sin. It is precisely because I know His goodness and have had experience of His power in preserving my life, that I have ever dared to sin. In another way I may have gone against Him for His goodness, if I have ever been jealous or envious of the spiritual or temporal good of others; if I have ever felt a certain rancour against others who were better than myself, and if, in consequence of their good acts or pious practices, I have had a sort of malicious pleasure in running them down or in ridiculing them.

Such things are not uncommon, however much they may seem to be against our moral sense ; let me therefore examine myself on these points, and correct whatever may be amiss.

Oh ! Jesus, I compassionate Thee in all the sufferings of Thy Sacred Heart and Mind, particularly those which have the peculiar malice of being inflicted for Thy goodness. I have sinned, as Thou knowest, my dear and loving Lord, but, by Thy grace, I will do better in future. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

SATURDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* xii. 10—36.

See our Blessed Lord brought in triumph to Jerusalem ; look upon Him, and learn the feelings of His heart ; study them and the other lessons to be derived from the gospel of to-day.

I.

The envy of the chief priests of the Jews was so great that they sought to kill not only our Dear Lord, but also Lazarus His friend, whom He had raised from the dead.

What a different sentiment was excited in the multitude ! For the Evangelist tells us that it was on account of the fame of this miracle that the people went forth to meet Jesus. We, as members of the true Church of Christ, profess to be His friends. He has certainly chosen us to be so, as much as He chose Lazarus, and if we are not His friends it is our own fault. Since we profess to be the especial friends of Jesus, we must not be surprised or downcast if the world ill-treat us on account of our religion. This very ill-treatment should be a source of consolation to us, since, among others, it is one proof of the truth of our faith, and it moreover makes us more like our Divine Master. We can better sympathise with His sufferings when we have to suffer something for His sake. Again, it should console us to know that the very things which are seized upon as pretexts for the world to hate us, are a source of attraction to the Faith to many others, just as the resurrection of Lazarus acted in opposite ways with the Jews. It made some desire to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus, while it led others

to meet Jesus and to sing, "Hosanna ! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel."

II.

Consider our Dear Lord arriving at the descent of Mount Olivet, and see how multitudes of the people meet Him ; they tear branches from the palm trees, and wave them in triumph before Him, while some cast their garments in the way that the feet of the ass on which He rides may pass over them. Hear how they shout with joyful acclamation, " Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matt. xxi. 9. Join in this triumph with all your heart ; unite with that multitude, and proclaim the glory of the son of David, the King of your heart. But how does Jesus act in this triumphant scene ? . Is He elated with joy and gratification ? No ; He weeps, as St. Luke tells us, not for Himself, but for the coming destruction of His beloved Jerusalem, and for the sins of the people, which would draw upon them that destruction. Truly this is

a moving scene ; the people shewing every demonstration of joy, and Jesus, the object of their acclamations, weeping. Cherish those sacred tears, and learn how much love there is in that dear Heart which suffered such intense sorrow on account of men, when they were in the height of exultation on account of Him.

III.

Hear how those joyful sounds are re-echoed by the walls of Jerusalem, which in so short a time were to return to Mount Olivet the fearful cry of "Crucify Him." How short-lived is popularity ! The idol of the people to-day, is to-morrow the object of their scorn and deadly hatred. The whole city is at the feet of Jesus on Mount Olivet, and in a very little while He will not have one friend near Him. Those who labour for popular favour will soon discover how fleeting and changeable it is. It can never confer true and lasting happiness, because it is so liable to fluctuations. If the public feeling changed so entirely and so rapidly with regard to Jesus, we may be quite sure that the slightest accident will

turn all the favour that we may enjoy into the bitterness of hatred. Nothing merely human can give solid joy to any true Christian. It is God alone and the things of God which can give it. In what have I sought my happiness? Is it in the praise of men's lips? It will vanish like smoke, and leave me desolate. If I have worked only to please men, or chiefly, or even partly for this end, my happiness cannot last even in this world. And, as for the next! what will be my thoughts of mere human applause when I come to die?

Oh! Dear Lord Jesus, give me a true love of Thee, so that I may be really Thy friend. Let me share in Thy sorrows that I may be more like Thee. I resolve for Thy sake to despise the favour of the world, and to seek only for Thy approbation. Do Thou aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

PALM SUNDAY.

GOSPEL.—*The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to St. Matthew xxvi. and xxvii.*

Behold our Blessed Lord in the garden of Gethsemani, overwhelmed with sorrow; and imagine yourself to be near, so that you can see Him and hear Him.

I.

Contemplate our Dear Lord after the Last Supper, during which He had foretold that Judas would betray Him, and had instituted that legacy of His most infinite love, the Holy Eucharist, descending with His disciples the hill side from the gate of Jerusalem to the little garden of Gethsemani. He was accustomed to pray in this garden, and now He goes to it for the last time, knowing full well what awaits Him there. Yet He does not shrink as yet from the thought of all His coming sufferings, but with unutterable calmness pursues His way towards the accomplishment of His Father's will, and the Redemption of

man. See how, after telling the rest of the disciples to remain at some distance, He takes Peter, and James, and John, the three who had beheld His Transfiguration, to be near Him, and to watch with Him. Hear what He says to them : " My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Surely such sad words were never uttered in this world before or since. His sorrow is so great, His pain of soul is so intense, that the least addition to it would kill Him. It brought Him to the very gates of death. He suffered in His sacred soul all the deep agony of dying persons. It seemed as if His very soul would die, if such were possible. See Him as He tells this so sadly to the three disciples ; look on His face so expressive of the woe of His dear soul.

II.

Then going a little farther, He falls upon His face, with all the weight of His sorrow upon Him, and prays to His Eternal Father. What is His prayer ? " Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

What a lesson for me ! I cannot bear the smallest pains and inconveniences without murmuring ; I who deserve so much for my sins ! But Jesus suffers for me with an expression of deepest submission to His Father's will. Pain and trouble often prevent me from praying or turning my heart to God at all ; but suffering only makes Jesus pray the more ; "and being in an agony, He prayed the longer." Luke xxii. 43. How the agony of His soul affects His body ! See how the blood is pressed from every pore ! He writhes upon the ground like a crushed worm. Can this be Jesus ? Can this be the innocent Lamb of God ? Can this be He who, true God and true man, loves me with an eternal love ? Oh ! it is true ! But I fly to Thee, my Jesus, my Lord, Thou love of my heart ; and I will console Thee by never sinning more. There never was sorrow like unto His sorrow, for it was the sorrow of a whole world, and of all the ages of the world, that pressed upon Him.

III.

Jesus willed, with the whole intensity of His will of God, to suffer ; and this made His sufferings infinite. But the cause of His suffering in the garden ? It was, in part, the sight which he had of all the other sufferings which were to come upon Him both in body and mind ; but still more, it was the close proximity to which He was brought with sin. He hated sin. He instinctively shrank from sin with such a sense of positive pain as when the most delicate nerves of our bodies are wounded ; and yet in His dereliction in Gethsemani, it seemed to Him as if He alone were guilty of all the sins that have been, or will be, committed in the world, from the sin of our first parents to the last sin of the last man. They were piled in one vast and nauseous heap upon Him. They clung to Him, and seemed to burn into His very soul, and to be made His and His alone. They formed a dark cloud about Him, shutting out the very heavens. His eyes saw nothing but sin, His ears were dinned

with horrid cries of sin, He felt but the loathsome touch of sin, He breathed the odious, noisome atmosphere of sin. And He so innocent that Heaven has nothing purer! My God! what terrible woe was all this to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! What part had I in this? Let me try to pluck out from that heap my own sins. I begin; but sin after sin develops itself; and the more I search, the more I find, till the task seems almost hopeless. Still I will go on; I will examine my conscience, I will confess my sins, I will be sorry for them, and I will resolve never to commit them again. Oh! my dear Jesus! as Thou liest upon thy face in the Garden, Thou dost think of me as much as if I were the only creature of Thy hands upon the earth. Thou dost feel my sins individually pressing upon Thee, and hurting Thy dear soul with unspeakable wounds. I will never offend Thee again. Jesus, aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* xii. 1—9.

Imagine Jesus in the house of Simon the leper at Bethania. See Lazarus and his sisters ; the disciples with Judas among them ; study the whole scene, and endeavour to draw some good out of it for yourself.

I.

It is the most commonly received opinion that the woman, Mary, who is described to have anointed the feet of our Dear Lord, is the same Mary Magdalen who is related by St. Luke, chap. vii., to have performed a similar action at an earlier period. Thus this is the second time that she comes with a public manifestation of her great love for Jesus, and it is worthy of remark that St. Matthew, chap. xxvi., tells us that she anointed His head. The first time it was only His feet, as most fitting to Mary when repenting ; now His head also, as the effect of the love of Mary sanctified. Thus love and humility are very conspicuous in the

conduct of Mary ; and indeed, they may be said to contain the sum and substance of our duty to our Dear Lord. We cannot love Him as we ought without having faith and hope in Him, and without keeping His commandments ; and we cannot have true humility without a sense of our own helplessness without Him, and sincere sorrow for our offences. Is the love that I have for Jesus solidly grounded upon true charity and humility ? Let me be careful that my devotion is not merely sentimental or emotional, and that it has a true foundation. In order to discover this, let me examine and see if I am good only by fits and starts ; if I am pious and virtuous only when piety and virtue happen to fall in with my own humour ; or if I am steadily and perseveringly good and religious in spite of dryness of spirit, disinclination of mind, or outward distractions and temptations. If I find that my examination is against me, I will set to work at once to correct my fault.

II.

Consider how, in the midst of the conso-

lation which Jesus derived from the pious act of Mary Magdalen, His blessed soul was pained by hearing one of His own Apostles blaming the manifestation of her piety. How harshly the rude objection of Judas must have jarred against His tender heart ! How chillingly the cold calculation must have fallen upon the ears of so many who loved Him ! It is the fate of the truly pious to be misunderstood, and to meet with rude shocks to their feelings of devotion. Let us not be discouraged if the worldly-minded, or even persons whom we esteem as good, do not appreciate all that we do for God in the candid sincerity of our hearts. If we are truly good, we shall have no great idea of our own good acts ; and we shall moreover remember that no amount of the world's disapproval will diminish what merit we may have in the sight of God.

III.

Judas blamed the conduct of Mary in pouring ointment upon the head and feet of Jesus, on the ground that it might have

been sold, and the price given to the poor. The gospel goes on to say : " Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief." How infinitely painful it must have been to the Sacred Heart of Jesus to hear this declaration of pretended solicitude for the poor, when He knew every thought that passed through the mind of the traitor Judas, and every motive that influenced His conduct ! It was His intimate knowledge of hearts and of motives, His clear perception of every human thought, that added so much to the pain of Jesus Christ both before and during His Passion. Or rather, it was this that gave to all His sufferings one of those distinctive characteristics which set them apart from the ordinary sufferings of men. It was not only words that were said, and actions that were done that afflicted Jesus. It was not merely that He perceived, as any man might perceive, that He was treacherously sold and delivered up, that He was falsely accused, that He was struck, and spit upon, and scourged, and crowned with thorns, and crucified ; but He had a clear

and distinct view of the hearts, and minds, and souls, and consciences, and thoughts, not only of the men who did these deeds upon His Sacred body, but of all men from the beginning to the end of time. What a hideous picture to be presented to the Lord of holiness! I know what He saw in the heart of Judas; what did He see then, and what does He see now, in my heart?

Oh! my God! give me true love towards Thee, and true humility. Let me see myself as Thou seest me; and give me grace never to try to cover my real badness with a veil of hypocrisy. Dearest Lord, I resolve to endeavour to make amends to Thee for all the bitter pain Thou didst endure for me, by loving Thee as much as I can, and by endeavouring, by a good example, to lead others to love Thee. Do Thou aid me by Thy grace. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to St. Mark xiv., xv.*

Picture to yourself Jesus carried by the

rude men who had taken Him prisoner, to the high priest, and placed like a criminal before him.

I.

Consider Jesus in the hands of a cruel and remorseless mob of soldiers and other persons, entirely surrounded by enemies. Like ravenous wolves, they thirst for His blood. See the dark satisfaction of the chief priests, and the Scribes and Pharisees; the rudeness of the soldiers, the wild spirit of persecution of the lawless ruffians who drag Him along. Hear their loud cries, and the injurious words and insults that are heaped upon this innocent Lamb of God. It is our Father, our Brother, our most faithful and loving Friend who is thus hurried before the judgment seat, with such a terrible array of enemies around Him. It is the eternal Word made flesh who is thus treated as the vilest malefactor. It is the everlasting Son of God who came down from heaven to bleed, and to die, in order to save the very men who clamour for His punishment and death. Before the

high priest He, true God as well as true man, is accused of blasphemy! Witness after witness is brought against Him, and there is not one to speak in His favour, though the witnesses were false, and their testimony did not agree. His disciples had fled. But Peter and another disciple followed Him, not daring to be with Him and known as His, but appearing as if drawn by curiosity, and indifferent to His fate. Think of Him in such terrible desertion, and unite your heart with His.

II.

Jesus, so solitary and friendless, calls for all our compassion; for what mental pain can be greater than that of suddenly finding oneself without a single friend, and surrounded by all the enmity that envy and malice can bring? But this is not all. When the high priest exclaimed that He had blasphemed, they began to spit upon Him; they covered His eyes, and struck Him, and in irony bade Him tell who it was that had done the infamous deed. Who can tell what consolation it would

have afforded Jesus if some friendly voice had whispered a word of comfort to His poor wounded heart? If He could have seen some well-known face looking upon Him with a kindly and affectionate glance? Is there not one to give Him a reassuring pressure of the hand? Not one! But hark! There is at last the voice of one whom He knows and loves full well—one who has said that though he should die with Him, he never would deny Him. May we not hope for some comfort for Him now? Vain hope! Peter denies Him; nay, curses and swears that he does not know Him. Can it be possible, my Jesus! that it has come to this? Is this all that Thou hearest from Thy chosen Apostle?

III.

When Jesus heard Peter deny Him, and even curse and swear that he knew Him not, He did not reproach the apostle, but St. Luke tells us, in a few moving words, that “the Lord, turning, looked on Peter.” This was sufficient to strike remorse into Peter’s heart; he remembered what Jesus

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had said to him before, and "going out, wept bitterly." Imagine that look of Jesus, so full of plaintive tenderness and love. How the sight of that sad, pale, bruised, and disfigured face affected the poor apostle! Let me reflect on all the share I had in this painful scene by my sins, which were present to the mind of Jesus by His foreknowledge. Let me also think how I may show my sympathy with Him, and obtain grace for myself, by making use of opportunities of imitating Him. It is very painful to me when I know that people are ashamed of being acquainted with me; when I know that they have spoken slightly or insolently about me; when any one whom I love, and have favoured, and have looked upon as a friend, talks against me behind my back. It is a terrible shock to find suddenly that one whom I have trusted acts in such a way as to forfeit my confidence, because he finds that others are against me. It is perhaps still harder when I accidentally overhear my trusted friend speaking ill of me with words of contempt or insult, when he ought to defend me.

My heart and feelings are deeply wounded; yet perhaps I really deserve it. Jesus did not deserve it; yet He was patient and kind. Have I been so under such circumstances? Have I thought of offering up such injuries to Him in reparation for my share in His sufferings, and in affectionate sympathy with Him?

Oh! my Dear Lord Jesus! I unite my heart with Thine in Thy most bitter desertion by Thy friends; I will try to comfort Thee by my faithful attachment to Thee. Oh, give me grace to bear all injuries, especially those which come from such as ought to be my friends, with charity and with resignation. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to St. Luke xxii., xxiii.

See our Dear Lord Jesus, loaded with a heavy cross, toiling along the pathway towards Calvary. He meets a number of people, and of women, who bewail His fate. Look upon Him and hear His words.

I.

I imagine myself near the walls of Jerusalem ; my heart loves Jesus ; I know partially what is going on in the city ; I hear horrible cries which are echoed through the streets, and are re-echoed by the height of Calvary. I listen, and I hear the fearful words, "Crucify Him ! crucify Him !" Is it Jesus whom they would crucify ? No ; it must be Barabbas, the rebel and the murderer. I hear his name : Barabbas ! Barabbas ! Surely they are leading him to execution, and the sweet, pure, innocent Lamb of God, so guiltless and so patient, is released ! The procession leaves the city walls, and what do I see ? Surrounded by soldiers, by rough and cruel men who strike Him and urge Him onward, carrying upon his poor bruised shoulders a rude, heavy cross, well-nigh sinking beneath the burden, is my Brother, my Friend, my Father, my Saviour, my God ! A crown of thorns is upon His brow, and the blood streams down His sacred cheeks, mixed with tears. Was ever sight more piteous ? Who has done this, O Jesus ? I, I have done it by my sins !

Oh ! woe is me, that ever I should have sinned !

II.

But who are these who meet Him on the way to Calvary ? “ A great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed and lamented Him.” I hear their sobs and woful sighs. God bless those faithful hearts. I hear their cries, and feel how all their lamentation goes straight to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This sad sorrowing is even a cheerful sound amid the curses, and blasphemies, and injuries of every kind that are heaped upon Him ! Oh ! good, kind hearts ! weep on for Jesus. I would that my hard and dry heart could weep with yours. Why do I not shed tears of blood for Him, my love, my only good ? He speaks ! The sweet victim led to the slaughter speaks ! “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me.” Oh ! dear words ! Oh ! loving heart of Jesus ! Thou hast annihilated Thyself, and Thou seemest to forget Thyself. “ Not for me.” “ Let me suffer all. I am willing. I came into the world to suffer. Do not

weep for *me*." Oh, Jesus! Thou wilt break my heart if Thou speakest thus. Why should I not weep for Thee? Why may I not lament Thy bitter pains?

III.

"Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children." Ah! here is the key to all. It is Thy love for us which makes Thee forget Thyself. "Weep for yourselves." Oh! the unselfish heart of Jesus, which in the midst of its pains, thinks only of the children of men, and of the punishments which will fall upon them! How unlike Jesus I am, while I profess to follow Him, and to have Him for my only guide. Whatever I suffer, I suffer justly, because I deserve it, and because it is God's will. And yet, although I know this, I murmur, and want all men to sympathize with me. I do not think of suffering for Jesus' sake; still less of enduring anything for other men. Yet Jesus bore all for us, and would not have those good women to weep for Him. He thought of them and their children, and forgot Himself.

Oh! Jesus my Lord, the love of my heart, I sympathize with Thee, and love Thee. And I resolve that, by Thy grace, I will bear patiently all crosses and trials for Thy sweet sake, and that for the love of Thee, I will think more of my neighbour's sufferings and misfortunes than of my own. Give me grace to be unselfish. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

GOSPEL.—*John* xiii. 1—15.

Picture to yourself Jesus Christ, with sweet humility, passing from Apostle to Apostle after the Last Supper, and washing their feet.

I.

Consider the words of the Gospel which tell us that "Jesus knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father; having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them even to the end." Jesus knew perfectly that the time of His sufferings and death

was at hand. The whole future was distinctly before His mind; all the pains and insults He was to endure in soul and body; all the terrible crimes that in the next few hours would be committed against the eternal Majesty of Heaven. He not only knew that He was to die upon the cross, but also that He would rise again triumphantly from the dead, and that, by a glorious Ascension, He would go up to Heaven, and sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Knowing that he was thus drawing towards the time of His departure from the world, He wished to give to His Apostles a lesson on the preparation for their own departure, and, through His Apostles, an example to all Christians. And so He makes a manifestation of the two great virtues of Charity and Humility; of highest Charity in the establishment of the Holy Eucharist, and of Humility in washing the feet of the Apostles. As we advance in life, and inevitably draw nearer to the time of our departure from the world, do we increase in these sublime virtues? Let me examine and see if my

love of God and of my neighbour in God and for God is greater now than formerly? Do I constantly keep before my eyes the great fact that I am to die soon; and in contemplation of this certain fact, am I careful to keep my soul in such a condition that it is fit to go to the Father, to pass clearly through the awful judgment, and to enjoy the love of God, and the happiness of Heaven for ever? Is it my constant occupation to enrich my soul with the virtues of Charity and Humility?

II.

Having loved His own . . . He loved them to the end." There is no cessation of His love. He went on ever loving them. No thought of Himself ever put the love of them out of His heart. All the persecutions He had to endure during His mission never caused Him for one instant to pause or grow cool in His deep love. Through all the melancholy stages of His sacred Passion, His love for them burned most ardently in His soul. It was this very love

of His creatures that caused Him to pass through such a sea of suffering, and which pursued Him and surrounded Him even to the end, when He hung upon the cross, and looked forth from that tree of death upon the upturned faces of that fearful crowd. If we could see the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we should behold it beating to the end with the love of us; if we could feel it, we should find it all aglow with love. Is my conduct like that of Jesus? And yet He tells me in this gospel that His acts are my example. How often has it not happened to me that trials infinitely less than those of Jesus, crosses far less heavy than His, have caused me to grow slack in the love of God and my neighbour? Have I never neglected my duty to God or man, urging as an excuse for my neglect that my mind was disturbed or in suffering? Is this loving God to the end? Is this imitating Jesus?

III.

If Jesus loved us to the end, that is even unto death, so that He died for the love of us, He also loved us to the end of love;

that is, He could not love us more than He did. He loved us to the perfection of love. His love is so great that there can be no greater love. There is nothing wanting to His love ; it cannot go farther ; it cannot by any possibility be added to, because it is infinite. It has no bounds, and fills up all God's immeasurable power of loving. Then, besides loving us as God, He loves us with all the immense love of His entirely perfect and pure human nature. What a return of love does this demand from me !

Jesus, my loving Lord and Saviour, who hast told us that men should know that we are Thy disciples if we love one another, give me grace to increase hourly in the love of Thee above all things, and of my neighbour as myself. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

GOOD FRIDAY.

*The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ,
according to St. John xviii. and xix.*

Throw yourself in spirit at the foot of

the Cross on Mount Calvary, and contemplate Jesus dying for the love of you.

I.

The foot of the Cross is the fitting place for a Christian soul, for where its love is there it ought to be. And the truth of love is tested when the object of it is in suffering or disgrace. What should I have done, and where should I have been, if I were one of the friends of Jesus at that terrible time? Should I have had the courage to face the obloquy which attended Him, and which was reflected upon His friends? Should I have dared, when so many fled away, to have remained with Him, and to have expressed my sympathy and my undying affection for Him? If I consider my conduct, I can scarcely conclude that I should have been more courageous than the disciples. I am so often deterred from my duty by what the world says, and I think so much of the opinion of others, especially of those whom my cool reason tells me are unworthy of being

considered. Do I not dread to go against the indifferent and the bad, more than I respect the opinions and follow the advice of the good and virtuous? Let me conceive a just indignation against myself for my cowardice and want of principle. I will ever keep the sight of Jesus crucified before my eyes, that I may never be ashamed of the Cross.

II.

If I look upon my crucified Saviour, what do I see? That dear head, erewhile so comely and so full of heavenly beauty, now hanging forward, now thrown back in racking agony. The brow is pierced by long, cruel thorns; the fair hair matted with blood. Those eyes whose glance was love, and purity, and blessing, are heavy with fever pains, blinded with streams of blood, glazed with coming death. Those lips that have spoken words of salvation, and truth, and healing of soul and body, are parched and cracked with unbearable thirst. Those hands whose touch had cured the blind, and raised the dead to

life, are nailed outstretched upon the cross. Those blessed feet which sanctified the earth they trod upon, which had borne Him in His journeys through the land when He went about doing good, transfixed with horrid nails, are fastened to the cross. The whole of that weary, wounded body hangs heavily by those hands and feet ; and all the while His sacred, priceless blood falls drop by drop upon the ground. What pangs shoot through the tender flesh of the most perfect and sensitive body that] ever was created ! What a death-bed is this for Jesus, the Son of God, the love of my heart !

III.

There was a tenderness in the heart of Jesus, which all His pains could not suppress, and in the midst of His most bitter agony and dying, a manifestation of it was called forth by the sight of His Mother and the Disciple "whom He loved." Whether Her face was turned towards Him in bitter grief, or hidden in speechless woe, the sight of Her, to whom He

was such a perfect son, and the knowledge of Her intense suffering was a most bitter drop in the chalice of His affliction. How those two hearts must have spoken to each other in that moment! What thoughts must have flown from the Cross to Mary, and from Mary to the Cross! Mother and Son thus silently communing at such a death-bed! But Jesus speaks; and He gives her to St. John, and St. John to her, to be as mother and son to one another. Spiritual writers tell us that by this act He gave her to us all, and all of us to her. We are the legacy that He left to her at this supreme moment. She will never forget it. Let us remember it, and endeavour to requite this tenderness of the Sacred Heart, by loving her whom He gave to us, and through devotion to her, by being brought nearer to Him, even though we have to go with her to the very foot of the Cross.

Oh! my Lord Jesus Christ, who hast redeemed me by Thy precious blood, give me grace ever to adhere to Thee, and to Thy law, and to Thy love, whatever pains

of soul or body I may have to endure. Give me a great love of Thy sacred Passion, a longing desire ever to be with Thee ; and as a means to this let me always cherish a deep love and devotion to Thy Blessed Mother and mine. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

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